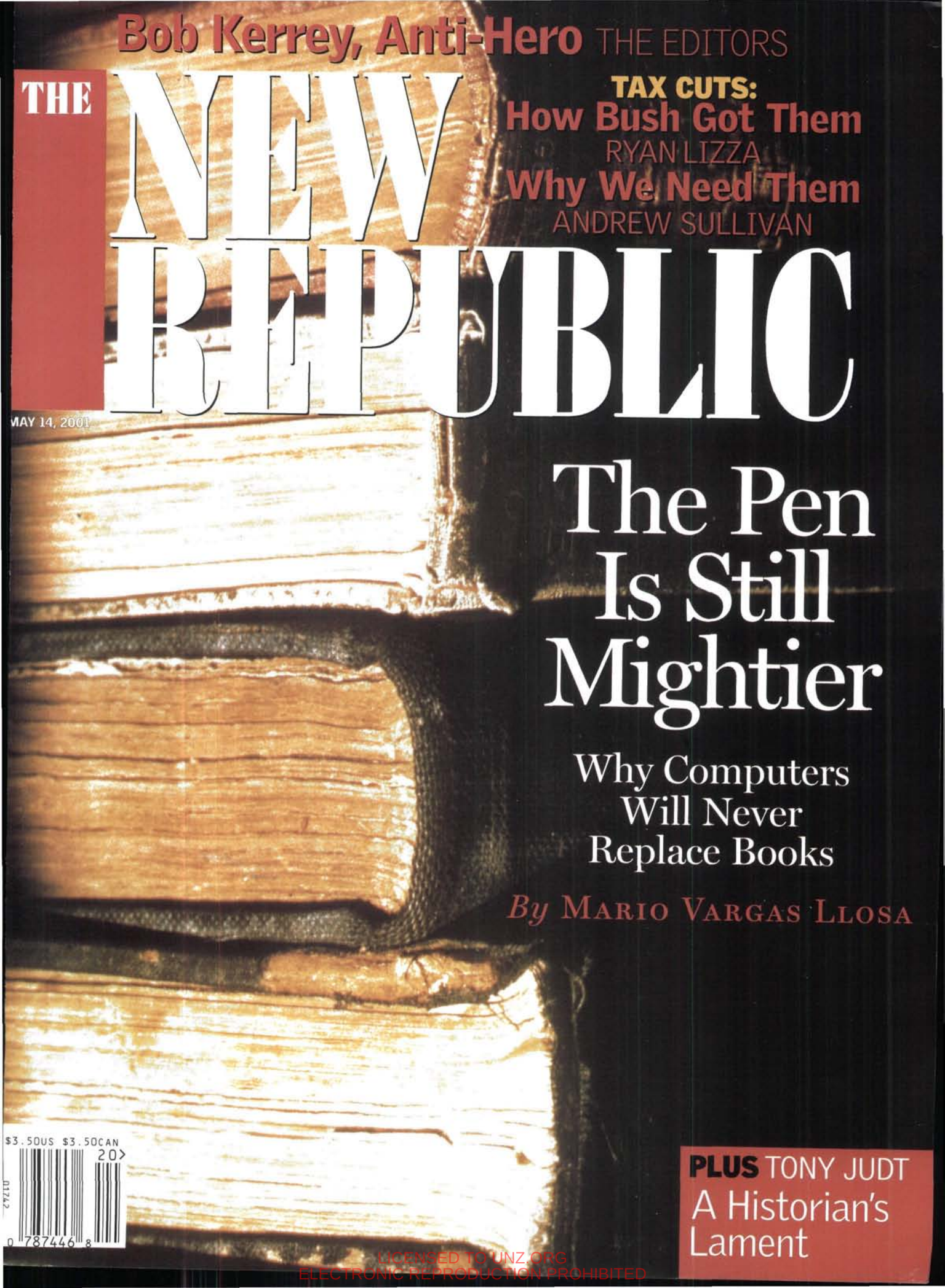

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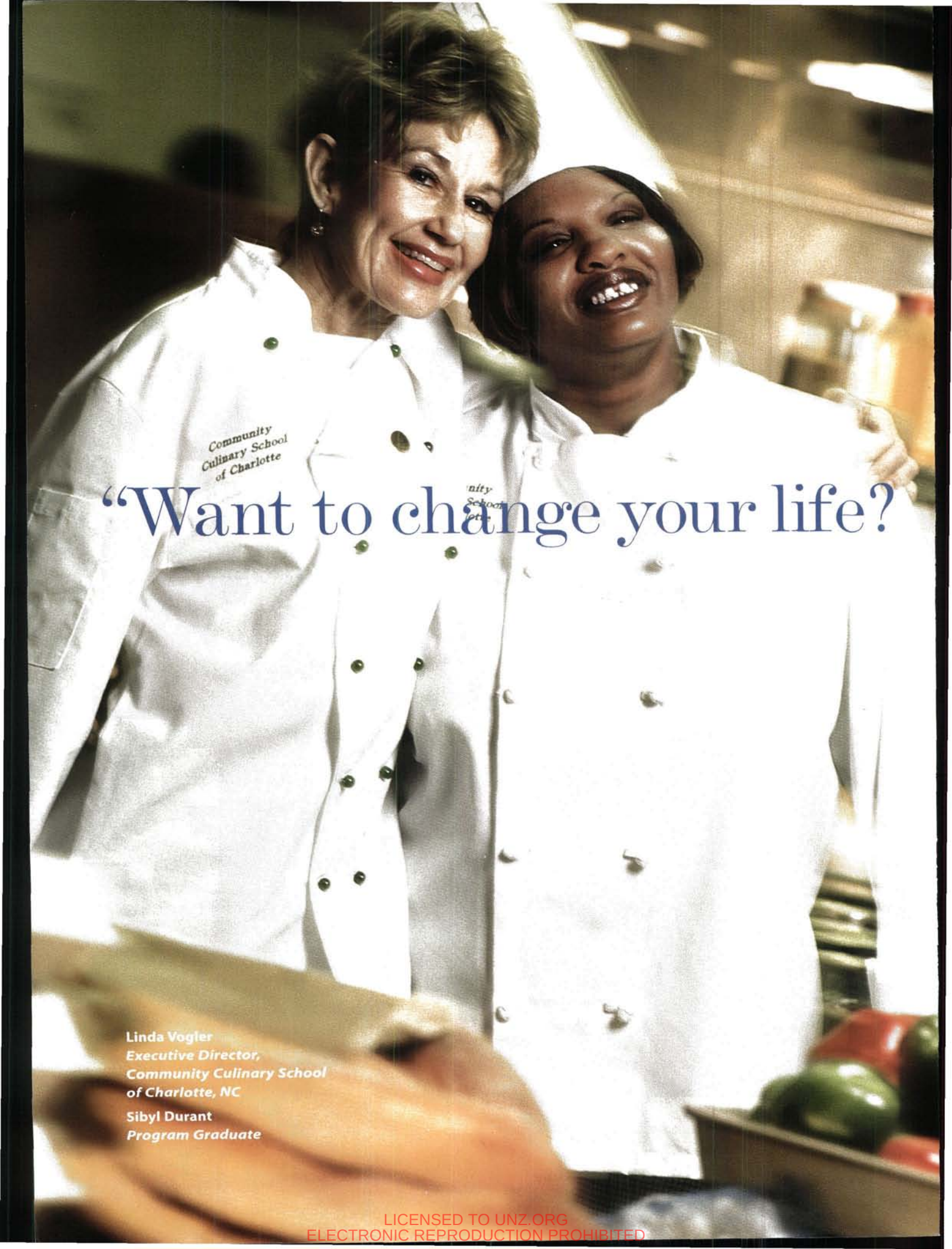

"Want to change your life?

Linda Vogler
Executive Director,
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of Charlotte, NC

Sibyl Durant
Program Graduate

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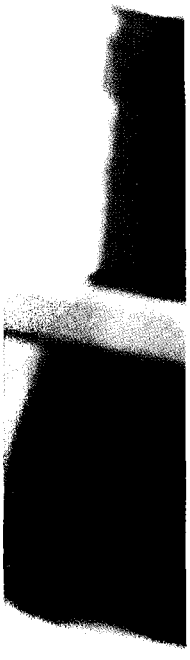

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CORRESPONDENCE

Equally troubling

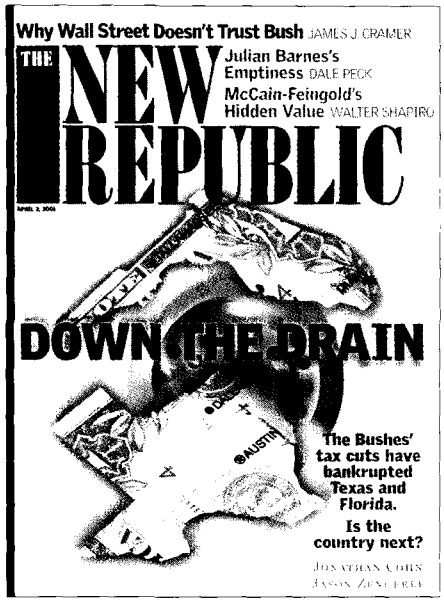
TO THE EDITORS:

One doesn't have to be Andrew Sullivan to be sickened by the cruel and brutal death of young Jesse Dirkhising ("Us and Them," April 2). Every decent person agrees that the sexual exploitation and murder of children—including this 13-year-old boy—is reprehensible and can only be described as *evil*. That is precisely why, contrary to Sullivan's assertion, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) condemned the murder in news accounts when it occurred.

We categorically reject, as does Sullivan, the notion that pedophilia is an inherent part of gay culture, values, or behavior. Yet Sullivan suggests that, as a gay organization, the HRC should speak out more vehemently regarding the Dirkhising case. He cannot have it both ways. The abuse and exploitation of any child should be uniformly condemned, regardless of the sexual orientation of the perpetrator. For example, in March in Washington state, a 15-year-old girl who was raped and murdered was laid to rest. The alleged perpetrator, a 48-year-old male, goes on trial in May. In Arizona, a man was just sentenced to 99 years for stabbing and sexually assaulting a 14-year-old girl. And, in Chicago, trial is under way for a 29-year-old man charged with raping and beating a nine-year-old girl and pouring roach killer down her throat. Where are the opinion columns and calls for media attention in these cases?

Equally troubling is Sullivan's premise that somehow gay organizations like the HRC orchestrated or "hyped" the media coverage of the death of Matthew Shepard. The fact is this: The death of Shepard, like the death of James Byrd Jr. before him, spontaneously struck a deep and sorrowful chord in our nation. The response was combustible and cannot be explained in simplistic media-relations terms. There are times when a death or a cruel act lays open the heart of a people. The death of Shepard, with the spontaneous vigils that erupted in communities all over our land, was one of those times.

Sullivan also fails to point out that the media coverage of Shepard's death was, in fact, an anomaly. Shepard was not the first gay person who died in a cruel fashion, and he will not be the last. Many other cases have not been covered. For example, Sullivan would be hard-pressed to explain why the death of J. R. Warren, a young, gay African American man who also died in an extreme and cruel manner, received very little coverage. In our view, the media coverage in Shepard's case followed the outpouring of sorrow and anger after his death.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We know Sullivan would like to see a world in which gay people are treated equally and fairly. We also know that Sullivan would like to see a world in which no child is harmed the way Jesse Dirkhising was. On these two points we agree wholeheartedly.

ELIZABETH BIRCH
Executive Director
Human Rights Campaign
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:

Andrew Sullivan's comments in "Us and Them" are typical of attempts by some to turn the tables on complaints by the oppressed. Every murder is evil. We have, and should have, explicit laws against murder. However, as Sullivan points out, Matthew Shepard's murder was not typical. He was murdered simply because of who he was. It was a form of vigilante genocide.

Unlike Shepard, Jesse Dirkhising was not murdered because of who he was. He was already protected by law against murder and victimization as a child, and his tormentors will suffer all the more for victimizing a child. Shepard was *not* protected by the law from being victimized as a homosexual. That lack of protection for Shepard directly contributed to his murder and is a story of national interest. It certainly deserves the number of articles written about it.

It would be nice to think that every tragic death would get the same news coverage just because every human life is precious. We all know that, in the real world of sound bites and talk shows, only a few important stories ever reach a national audience. Everyone who cares about people should be grateful that the Shepard story managed to reach a larger audience, since it is an important and compelling example of how people who are not like "us" are still sometimes treated in the heartland of America.

DAVID BRZEZINSKI
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Well-contained

TO THE EDITORS:

Thanks to Franklin Foer and Ryan Lizza for an informative article on the debate over the faith-based initiative ("Holy War," April 2). I only quibble with their portrayal of me as someone who "could barely contain his anger." I felt quite well-contained in questioning the Reverend Eugene Rivers about his (still) unsubstantiated suggestion that white evangelicals are "livid" that faith-based grants will go to black people. I did insist on a specific answer: Which white Christian leader was a racist? Rivers delayed until the lights went off, and, when pressed by several reporters afterward to cite where he read such outrageous remarks, he said, "I don't have to read that to know it."

TIM GRAHAM
White House Correspondent
World magazine
Washington, D.C.

Memory loss

TO THE EDITORS:

James J. Cramer is nostalgic for the Clinton economic team ("Street Cred," April 2). But since that team allowed the dangerous Wall Street bubble to grow without any brakes at all, I'm not sure why anyone except a Wall Street insider would share his nostalgia. Even when *The Wall Street Journal* reported that technology stocks were being manipulated by a new version of the illegal stock pools of the 1920s, no one in Washington so much as raised an eyebrow. Frankly, Wall Street's distrust of George W. Bush's bricks-and-mortar economic advisers is the single most encouraging aspect of the new administration.

THOMAS F. BERNER
New York, New York

Mandatory maximums

TO THE EDITORS:

Hardly an issue of THE NEW REPUBLIC goes by without a dire prediction about how tax cuts will bring America to the brink of fiscal Armageddon ("Déjà W.," by Jason Zengerle, and "Goodbye Sunshine," by Jonathan Cohn, April 2). All tax cuts—

continued on page 48

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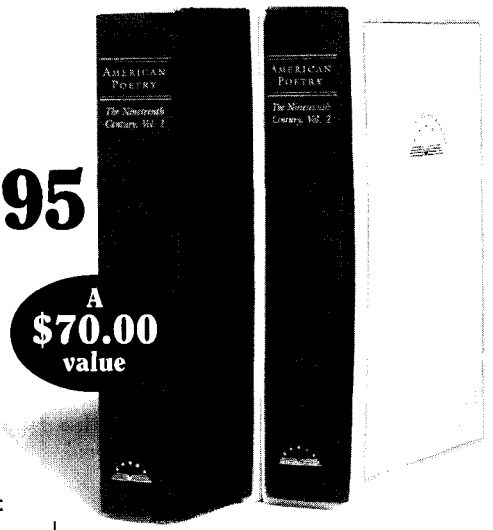

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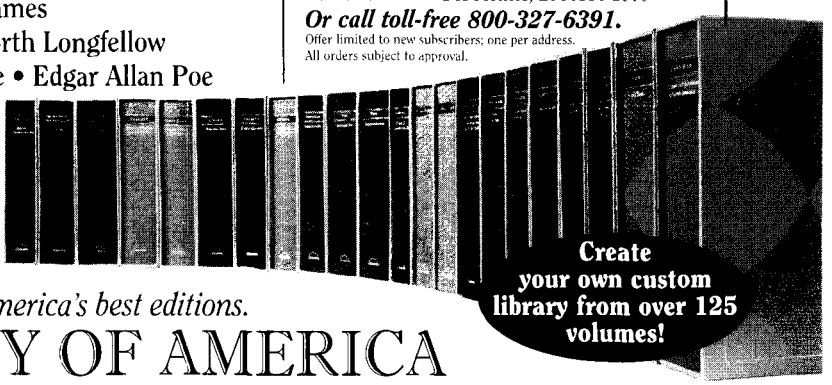

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Downsize

WE'RE ALMOST CERTAIN to enact a tax cut this year. The news this week that a nonbinding but significant deal has been struck for tax relief of something like $1.35 trillion will now be hashed over by the various parties to see who deserves the credit. As a general rule in these matters, the guy claiming that others should take the credit has won. That's George W. Bush. Not long ago, Democrats claimed they wouldn't agree to any tax cut. Al Gore preferred micromanaging tax credits to ensure that Americans spent their money the way Al Gore wanted them to spend it. Only Bush campaigned on an across-the-board tax cut, made it his obvious priority, and has now gotten a significant one. Or, put another way: George W. Bush, 1; *The New York Times*, 0.

Ah, but the details. The Krugmans and the Chaits will shortly have a cow, if not a whole herd of them. The *Times* will weigh in again with yet another barrage of articles, editorials, and op-eds opposing any tax relief that would actually benefit those who pay most of the taxes. And, to be fair to these liberal critics, they're right about one thing. One of the tax cut's effects will surely be that the United States won't be able to afford a vastly expanded Medicare drug benefit. And the archaic sinkhole known as Social Security won't be shored up either. And Medicare, may the gods preserve us, may even have to grow at a slightly slower rate. In fact, many of the spending programs that some still believe solve most human problems will encounter the only political resistance that matters in budgetary matters: insolvency.

To which my response is: Hoorah. We don't need these expansions of the welfare state. We need to privatize Social Security if we want to provide for our retirement in ways slightly more up-to-date than those based on economics and life-expectancy figures devised in the 1930s. We don't need to add yet another entitlement for the most pampered generation—our current seniors.

And if there is one thing we have learned in the past 20 years, it's that controlling government spending is simply impossible without deficits. Look back at the last decade. A huge part of Bill Clinton's economic success was his remarkable grip on public finances. He deserves credit for this, although the Republican Congresses from 1994 to 1998 were mainly responsible, and Ross Perot made deficit-cutting hot. But from 1998 on, all hell broke loose. Last year, discretionary spending increased by a whopping 8 percent—*under the Republicans*. The minute deficits became surpluses, in other words, the politicians started bribing the voters with their own money. The only relevant question is: Why do Dennis Hastert, Trent Lott, Dick Gephardt, and Tom Daschle know better than taxpayers how to allocate their own resources?

This point seems to me particularly acute when you consider the amazing prosperity we now enjoy. There is a strong case for government helping those who really cannot help themselves—in providing a safety net, some basic health care for the truly indigent, good public education, and so on. But as prosperity increases, it seems logical that these needs would diminish. The more people earn and the better off they are, the less they need the government to save them from penury. Since even the poorest today enjoy health and prosperity unknown to the middle class a generation ago, you'd think government's role might shrink as the resources of private wealth make it increasingly unnecessary.

But the last 50 years show this theory to be empirical moonshine. Once government programs begin, they soon lose any relationship to actual needs and become ends in themselves, with vested interests, pools of employees, vociferous bureaucracies, and craven politicians to protect them. Every year, businesses that no longer serve a real need go under. Every year, government programs that no longer serve a real need expand. And, of course, taxes keep increasing to pay for them. Take this astonishing figure: In 1944, when this country was at its peak of wartime mobilization and prosperity was a fraction of what it is today, individual income taxes made up 9.4 percent of the U.S. national income. Today, at a time of peace, after a decade of extraordinary growth, with defense spending at historic lows, individual income taxes make up 10.4 percent. What national emergency do we now face that requires us to tax people more than we did to sustain a global war on two continents?

The answer is: none. We just have a culture of dependency—middle-class, corporate, poor—on the federal teat. This dependency, by taking resources out of productive use and sending them to government to divvy up among political interest groups, slowly throttles innovation, industry, and economic and social vitality. Yes, some of the spending does some good. But it is overwhelmed by agencies and programs that exist purely to pay off political constituencies, fund programs that have little or no relationship to genuine need, pay for bureaucracies that do little productive work, and funnel pork dollars to home districts to help politicians get reelected. Once upon a time—say, 1961—liberals actually supported a tax cut proportionally bigger and less progressive, in income tax terms, than Bush's, in an era when the federal government was far smaller. But JFK was a liberal hero, and Bush is a right-wing maniac. Go figure.

The one source of hope is buried in Bush's budget. Fred Barnes pointed it out in *The Weekly Standard*. It's the magic number 15.6 percent—the proportion of GDP that government spending would eat up in 2011 if Bush gets his way. (The current number is 18 percent.) He won't, of course. The enervating parasite of big government will find a way to soak productive citizens of far more of their wealth than that. Some commentators—at this magazine and elsewhere—get steamed because Bush has obscured this figure or claimed his tax cut will cost less than it actually will, or because he is using Medicare surplus money today that will be needed tomorrow and beyond. Many of these arguments have merit—but they miss the deeper point. The fact that Bush has to obfuscate his real goals of reducing spending with the smoke screen of "compassionate conservatism" shows how uphill the struggle is.

Yes, some of the time he is full of it on his economic policies. But a certain amount of B.S. is necessary for any vaguely successful retrenchment of government power in an insatiable entitlement state. Conservatives learned that lesson twice. They learned it when Ronald Reagan's deficits proved to be an effective drag on federal spending (Stockman was right!)—in fact the only effective drag human beings have ever found. And they learned it when they tried to be honest about taking on the federal leviathan in 1994 and got creamed by Democrats striking the fear of God into every senior, child, and parent in America. Bush and Karl Rove are no dummies. They have rightly judged that, in a culture of ineluctable government expansion, where every new plateau of public spending is simply the baseline for the next expansion, a rhetorical smoke screen is sometimes necessary. I just hope the smoke doesn't clear before the spenders get their hands on our wallets again.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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Anti-Hero

WE ALL KNOW that we will never all know what happened in the nocturnal jungle at Thanh Phong on February 25, 1969; but still there is something a little grotesque about the alacrity with which Bob Kerrey seems to have been understood and forgiven. After all, a war hero was confessing to the possibility that he may also have been a war criminal. It was also not especially uplifting that Kerrey made his confession only after a reporter discovered that his SEAL team had murdered women and children, and many years after building a political career not least on his valor in Vietnam, and on his stirring representation of the predicament of the Vietnam veteran. The revelation about the massacre at Thanh Phong unleashed yet another bout of bathos about America in Vietnam, about our "shame" and our "glory." The commentary about this atrocity was curiously self-regarding, nationally and generationally. We moved ourselves. We felt deeply. What we did not do was think critically.

In the public mind, Kerrey has been exonerated on two grounds. First, that it was a good war, and he was doing his job. Second, that it was a bad war, and he was doing his job. Weirdly enough, both sides in the most excruciating debate in contemporary American history seem to be in immediate agreement that there is no moral scandal. The supporters of the war are worried that the dead of Thanh Phong will further disgrace the cause: My Lai was damaging enough. (It should be said immediately that the American culpability at My Lai was unequivocal, whereas it is the equivocal character of the events at Thanh Phong that has provoked this week's reckonings.) The opponents of the war are not surprised by the dead of Thanh Phong. Since they insist that the American evil in Southeast Asia was systematic and deranged—you might call this the Chomsky-Coppola analysis of the war—they are reluctant to make it personal and contrite. And so Kerrey is given a quick pass. Anyway, he is plainly a decent man, as the evidence of his subsequent career shows.

All this is much too simple. What if the war in Vietnam was a good war that went bad? What if Kerrey is a decent man who committed an indecent act? These are the kinds of complexities that embarrass ideology and sentimentality. Senator John McCain, who speaks about this subject with a special authority, observed on television that "our job . . . is to try to heal the wounds of war and not reopen them because of any specific incidents." But this is not at all obvious. The more we learn about the past, the better we comprehend it. And we learn about the past only by the study of "specific incidents." Surely "healing" is not accomplished by an indifference to truth. Or is the ascendancy of "healing" as an American ideal owed precisely to its indifference to truth, to its emotional efficiency, to its promise of an instant absolution and a swift "moving on"?

There is another reason for Kerrey's smooth passage through this ordeal of memory. It is the view that war is dirty. This view has the entire history of warfare to support it. But it, too, cannot explain the Kerrey disclosure away. Even if all war is dirty, not every soldier's every deed in war is dirty. Soldiers kill, but they are not all war criminals. There were many atrocities in Vietnam—so many, in fact, that they justified the extrication of the United States from the conflict—but atrocities were not the norm. It is hard to understand Senator Max Cleland's comment about Kerrey's conduct at Thanh Phong that "[i]n many ways it's a microcosm of what we all went through." Surely not every American soldier in Vietnam returned with the blood of women and children on his hands. In this sense, too, Kerrey appears to have distinguished himself.

But the issue is not only historical. We are living now in a golden age of atrocity, and American foreign policy is torn over the question of "humanitarian intervention." In the Balkans, the United States and its allies are seeking ways to bring to justice soldiers who were responsible for Thanh Phong-like outcomes in Bosnia and Kosovo. More and more we are relying upon truth commissions and international tribunals to record the unpleasant truths about recent conflicts and catastrophes, and to secure those unpleasant truths against the faulty memory of politics and culture. The culpability of Bob Kerrey has not been definitively established, but a country that makes such culpability into a burning question of policy cannot simply look away from what it has just learned about one of its leaders. He has to reckon with his conscience; but we have to reckon with our consciences, too. Idealists, if that is what we wish to be in our actions abroad, are not people who forgive themselves easily. ■

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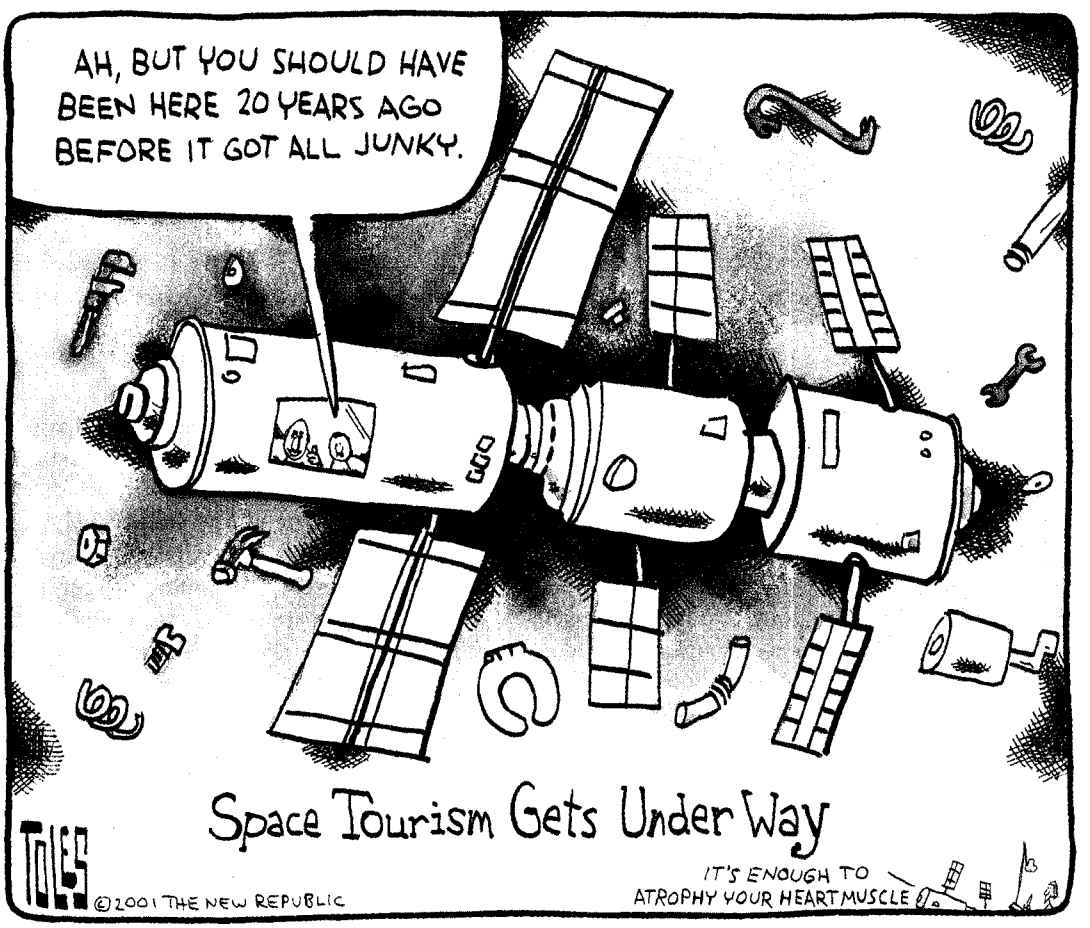
N O T E B O O K

INDUSTRY STANDARD: Every time you think the Bush administration's China policy can't get worse, it does. This week, W. picked as his nominee for U.S. ambassador to Beijing Clark "Sandy" Randt Jr., the president's former Yale fraternity brother and a longtime expert in doing business with China. And, while the first of these qualifications has received a certain amount of scrutiny ("We lived for Saturday night," Randt told *The Wall Street Journal* in 1999; "Saturday night was party night and it was rock 'n' roll, rhythm and blues, dance music and drinking beer"), the latter has not. Randt served as commercial attaché at the U.S. embassy in Beijing from 1982 to 1984 and has represented the American Chamber of Commerce and the National Council for U.S.-China Trade in Hong Kong and China, respectively. Since joining the law firm Shearman & Sterling in 1994, he has run its China practice, representing the Chinese interests of such multinationals as Chrysler, General Electric, AT&T, Merrill Lynch, and the Pacific Alliance Group. He is also the author of several books on doing business in China. All of this means exactly what it appears to mean: For all its campaign talk of converting China from a "strategic partner" to a "strategic competitor," the Bush administration is following the Clintonian policy of trade first, security second, human rights never. Some downplay the symbolic significance of replacing a military man—current Ambassador Joseph Prueher—with an international businessman, but the leadership in Beijing is unlikely to be among them. Nor are they likely to forget that Bush's reported first choice for the post, former Singapore Ambassador Jon Huntsman Jr., was dropped after, according to *The Washington Times*, "Beijing quietly signaled the Bush administration . . . that it would not approve." Presumably, the People's Republic likes Randt better. And why wouldn't it?

NORTHEASTERN EXPOSURE: Cynics have long claimed that Democrats like campaign finance reform only when it can't pass. If meaningful reform ever stood a chance of becoming law, they say, Democrats would undermine it rather than risk passing legislation that would reduce the natural fund-raising advantages of incumbency. This week, Democratic leaders in one of the nation's most Democratic states proved them right. In 1998, Massachusetts voters overwhelmingly approved a "Clean Elections" ballot initiative. Under its terms, which supporters hope someday to replicate at the federal level, candidates who collect a minimum number of signatures are eligible for public funds, as long as they agree to abide by overall spending limits. At least that's how it's supposed to work. The problem, as Massachusetts reformers are learning, is that simply passing the initiative isn't enough. The state legislature still has to appropriate the money to fund it. And that's where state Democratic leaders saw their opening. On Tuesday, the state's Democrat-controlled House passed an amendment removing the law's automatic funding from the annual budget, linking the funding to voluntary taxpayer donations, and putting a ceiling on those donations. Supporters of the measure said it will keep the program's cost manageable, but it wasn't a budget buster to begin with. The amendment's real purpose is to keep the popular program from working. Perhaps this is why Speaker Tom Finneran, the man behind the amendment, kept such a low profile: As *The Boston Globe* reported, he didn't even show his face on the House floor for the roll call, voting instead from his office. At a time when Democrats in the U.S. House are weighing their own votes on campaign finance reform, this is not a good sign.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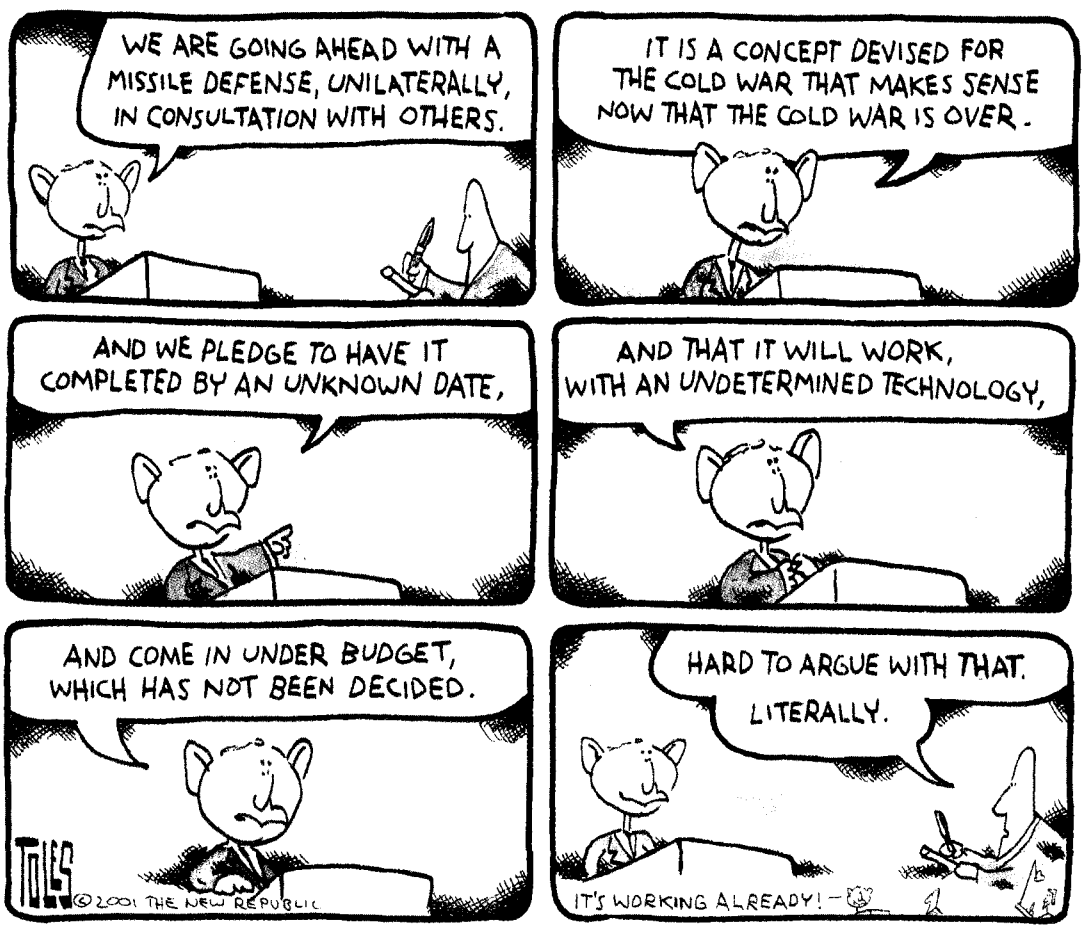
After all, if you can't sell reform in Massachusetts, where can you sell it?

BIPARTISAN FRONT: President Bush's creative interpretation of the term "bipartisan cooperation" continued this week with his appointment of a commission to study Social Security reform. The 14-member board is to be composed of seven Democrats and seven Republicans. But that's where the bipartisanship ends. Typically, the point of a bipartisan commission is—not surprisingly—to make sure the views of both parties are represented. And, not surprisingly, the seven Republicans the White House chose for the commission all favor the privatization of Social Security—which makes sense, given that this view is quite popular in GOP circles. The problem is that the seven Democrats on the committee (who were also handpicked by the White House) all support privatization as well—a decidedly minority view among Democrats. In addition to former Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, last seen shilling for privatization on the *New York Times* op-ed page, the Democrats on the panel include Sam Beard, a former congressional aide who heads a pro-privatization group called Economic Security 2000; Estelle James, a World Bank economist whose recent work has extolled the virtues of private-account systems in other countries; Olivia Mitchell, a University of Pennsylvania economist who supports private accounts and last May praised Bush's reform plan as "very courageous"; Tim Penny, a former Minnesota congressman who has spoken out repeatedly in support of privatization; and Fidel Vargas, former mayor of Baldwin Park, California, who, as a member of the last Social Security commission, endorsed a private-account scheme. Describing it to the press on May 1, President Bush said his panel would "make sure that there's an objective analysis of Social Security, how do we save it, what do we do to make sure it's viable in the future." But, that same day, White House press secretary Ari Fleischer read from a somewhat different script, telling reporters: "The commission that the president will announce will, of course, be comprised of people who share the president's view that personal retirement accounts are the way to save Social Security." We hope that shared view will not interfere with their "objectivity."

DEPT. OF SELF-PARODY: "CHARMING BUSH LAUDED AFTER 100 DAYS"—front-page headline, *The Washington Times*, April 30

TO THE HUMBLE DWEEB-MOBILE!: "Humility is a byword around the Bush White House. Staffers are warned not to get swelled heads. 'They were supposed to follow the example of the president, who likes to keep it simple,' says one aide."—*Newsweek*, May 7

"[Bush adviser Karl] Rove conceded that he was 'the biggest dweeb in my high school' and allowed as how he hasn't changed much in the intervening 32 years. But as he walked to his car outside the West Wing, it was clear that at least one thing had changed. Famous for driving beat-up heaps in Austin, Rove climbed into a metallic-blue Jaguar and roared into the night." —*Time*, April 30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ROLE REVERSAL: "It is, it's so beautiful to watch all these dorks walk around." —Rain Phoenix, sister of the late actor River Phoenix, commenting on the White House Correspondents' Dinner, *The New York Observer*, May 7 ■

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White House Watch

Double Play

By Ryan Lizza

The recent spate of "first 100 days" retrospectives neatly divided into two categories: Bush the Conservative, aggressively pushing an agenda more ideological than expected, and Bush the Conciliator, striking a low-key, bipartisan tone. Both were right. In fact, the president has two models—a conciliatory one based on his experience in Texas and a confrontational one based on Ronald Reagan's first term in Washington. He uses the former for his education plan and the latter for his tax cut. And both are working, so far.

First, consider the White House style on education reform. Monday evening, around seven o'clock, the president's chief congressional lobbyist, Nick Calio, called Senator Ted Kennedy at home to chat about Bush's education plan. The two sides had been negotiating for weeks over the federal government's share of elementary and secondary school funding. Kennedy started off by asking for a $14.4 billion increase; the White House offered a mere $2.6 billion. In a conference call Monday afternoon among Kennedy, Calio, and several Bush aides (including top education advisers Sandy Kress and Margaret La Montagne), Kennedy knocked down his proposal to $4.8 billion, with the expectation of more funding in future years. That night Calio called Kennedy back with a White House counteroffer of $4 billion. It was close, but Kennedy politely rebuffed him: "It's not good enough."

The following day, Kress and several other administration officials joined staffers from the offices of Democratic Senators Kennedy, Lieberman, Bayh, Landrieu, Bingaman, and Dodd and Republican Senators Frist, Collins, Gregg, and Jeffords in a hearing room on the fourth floor of the Dirksen Senate Office Building. Gathered around a square of tables, the education wonks hammered out some of the final details of a compromise on Bush's plan to sanction failing schools. Two hours later, they had reached a tentative agreement on a controversial measure defining the progress failing schools must make to keep federal funds.

Neither Kennedy's haggling with the White House over money nor the Dirksen meeting was an anomaly. According to Kress, he has hosted "dozens and dozens" of such sessions in crafting Bush's education bill. A Lieberman aide present at many of them gushes, "All and all, it's been free of the rancor and partisanship and inflexibility that really dogged the education debate the last few years." When Bush visited Lieberman's home state of Connecticut recently, he applauded the senator for his leadership. And, in an interview with education reporters on Tuesday, Bush singled out Kennedy for praise.

Now consider the rather different perspective on the White House held by Senator Ben Nelson, a Democrat from Nebraska. Unlike Kennedy, Nelson is not viewed as evil incarnate by many of Bush's supporters. And, unlike Lieberman, he's not thinking about running against Bush in 2004. In fact, Bush and Nelson have been friends since their days as governors. But Nelson's chief experience with the White House has been the tax cut. And it hasn't been pleasant.

Last February, Bush swung through Nelson's home state, not to praise the freshman senator but to implore Nebraskans to pressure him to vote for Bush's tax package. When Nelson voted to strip $450 billion from Bush's plan, White House Budget Director Mitch Daniels called the *Omaha World-Herald*—unsolicited—to explain that Nelson had been "overcome by the pressure he couldn't withstand from his party elders"—a damning thing to say about a narrowly elected conservative Democrat in a Republican state.

Nor was Nelson the only Democrat to take a hit. True, the president appeared open to negotiation: Last Wednesday, Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Chief of Staff Andy Card, and Calio met individually with Nelson and four other middle-of-the-road Democrats to discuss a tax cut compromise between Bush's vaunted $1.6 trillion proposal and the $1.2 trillion alternative all five had supported in the Senate. Bush held a similar sit-down the night before with John Breaux, self-appointed leader of the Senate Democratic moderates, over a steak dinner in the president's private residence. But, hours after meeting with the Democrats, Bush flew to Louisiana and told a huge crowd to ask their congressional delegation (i.e., Breaux) to support Bush's full tax cut. The move left the moderates bewildered. As an aide to Nelson put it: "The message in the morning was, 'Where is there room for compromise?' The message in Louisiana is, 'Call your senators and tell them to support a $1.6 trillion tax cut. . . .' I don't get how you can do that in the same day."

The hardball continued. This Tuesday, Republican leaders announced they had agreed to a ten-year tax cut of $1.25 trillion, along with a $100 billion stimulus this year. The package was virtually identical to the proposal from Breaux and other moderates. Bush wasted no time in declaring that, by "working together," Republicans and Democrats had crafted a victory. There was only one problem: The agreement was reached solely by the White House and Republican congressional leaders. An aide to one of the Senate moderates whom Bush had courted scoffed, "The president goes out into the Rose Garden and says we've got a bipartisan agreement, yet no Democrat has been contacted—not a single one of us."

Neither the administration's "Kill them with kindness" education strategy nor its "Just kill them" tax cut assault comes out of the blue. On education, Bush is doing what he did in Texas. When W. ran for governor in 1994, major elements of his education and crime proposals were already making their way through the Texas legislature, and that greased the skids for his agenda once in office. The same is now true of education reform in Congress. Last year Republicans and Democrats, after a long debate, failed to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for the first time since 1965. For Bush it was a "godsend," says

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Handicapped American Schools

Herbert J. Walberg is University Scholar, University of Illinois at Chicago; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover nstitution; and member, oover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

The United States school system is distinctive in lacking a national ministry of education that sets forth uniform education goals and standards. Our Constitution leaves authority over schools to the states. The states delegate much authority to local school districts, which leave much discretion to principals and teachers. This local control makes for great diversity in student learning, but **students who move from one school to another often lack the knowledge necessary for success in their new schools.**

Our system is distinctive in other ways that handicap efficiency. Ludger Woessmann of the Kiel Institute of World Economics reported the largest study of educational efficiency ever conducted. His analysis of thirty-nine countries showed that close attention to test results, school control over staff and operations, teacher discretion over teaching methods, and competition from private schools fostered high achievement. The influence of teacher unions on curriculum had negative effects, and spending made no difference.

The findings help explain the U.S. oddity of high costs but poor student progress during the school years. In his 1776 book *The Wealth of Nations,* Adam Smith suggested that "division of labor" promotes efficiency. In many efficient organizations, three groups divide their efforts: external boards establish their distinctive mission, set goals, and measure progress; responsible and responsive to boards, management hires staff and directs operations; staff members hardly invent their own idiosyncratic goals but concentrate on carrying out their responsibilities to attain board goals. Sustained failure of any one of these three groups at their respective tasks means the organization fails.

Nearly the opposite is true of the U.S. public school system. No goal is too remote from academic learning to adopt; no "stakeholder" too removed from having a say about the mission and goals. State and local school boards fail to set clear goals and measure progress. At the same time, they tend to interfere with school management.

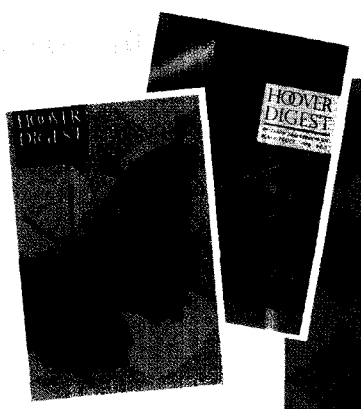
Teachers, principals, boards, and national interest groups compete to set priorities and control teaching. Yet when everyone is responsible, no one is responsible, and having twenty-three priorities means having none. Contention, noise, and fads prevail. In the end, teachers cannot depend on what their students were previously taught. Boards, leaders, and staff all overreach, and yet each group tends to fail at its distinctive task. A thousand flowers bloom but do not a garden make.

Other countries provide much better accountability. While making goals clear, they allow parental choice of privately and publicly governed schools, both publicly financed. **Competition encourages educators to identify the best practices and helps parents choose the best schools.** We spend public funds only on public schools, which limits most parents to the beggar's choice of only a single school, which has little incentive to improve since its customers have nowhere else to go.

The answers to these problems are clear: measurement and accountability for results, public support of schools that compete with one another, and parental choice of schools.

— Herbert J. Walberg

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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Kress, because it meant Congress would have to take up education reform this session. And Bush has adopted many of the ideas already popular in centrist Democratic circles, as well as Republican ones. In fact, Kress, the White House's key education negotiator, is a longtime member of the Democratic Leadership Council.

On tax cuts, the uncompromising approach isn't so much Governor Bush's as President Reagan's. Bush modeled his tax cut tour on Reagan's effort to sell his 1981 budget directly to the people. Like Reagan, Bush has focused on picking off conservative, largely Southern, Democrats—those who used to be called "boll weevils." And, like Reagan, Bush has played fast and loose with his budget projections to counteract Democratic warnings that the tax cut will unleash massive deficits.

On both issues, the White House will almost surely end up with a political win. But both also illustrate the potential dangers of the conciliation and confrontation models for the rest of Bush's term. The Reagan strategy on tax cuts has alienated many centrist Democrats—exactly the people Bush will need if, as his advisers suggest, he next tackles the more politically precarious issue of Social Security privatization. The Texas strategy on education has required so much compromise with liberal Democrats that conservatives have begun to grumble; they might wage open rebellion if W. tried it again—say, on prescription drugs. But those are worries for another day. For the moment, Bush has maneuvered his two biggest proposals through a congressional minefield. And in doing so, he's acquired not just one successful political identity but two. ■

On the Hill

Central Casting

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

WHEN REPUBLICAN REPRESENTATIVE Connie Morella ran for reelection last year, she didn't exactly embrace George W. Bush's proposed tax cut. A moderate from a Democratic-leaning Maryland district, Morella said she preferred Al Gore's "targeted tax cuts" to W.'s "too big" $1.6 trillion plan. Even after November 7 she remained skeptical, telling *Business Week* that "[w]e need to continue to pay down the debt" and announcing that if the presidential election wound up in the House, she'd vote for Gore. As recently as January, she told local TV news that Bush should drop his tax cut altogether.

Fast-forward to March 8, the day Bush's huge tax cut came up for a vote in the House. The GOP's bare ten-seat majority gave the 40 or so House Republican moderates enormous leverage to reshape the president's plan or junk it altogether. It was Morella's moment. And she caved. In fact, so did every GOP centrist, including several who had publicly criticized the president's plan. Bush's budget, $1.6 trillion tax cut included, passed the House without a single dissenting Republican vote.

It may be the biggest puzzle of the tax cut fight. In the Senate, Republican moderates have given the White House fits. Three Northeastern centrists—Vermont's Jim Jeffords, Rhode Island's Lincoln Chafee, and Pennsylvania's Arlen Specter—last month defied administration pressure and helped Senate Democrats chop W.'s tax cut by nearly one-quarter. In the House, many commentators expected GOP centrists to do much the same. Indeed, the moderates themselves had boasted that their priorities would carry the day. "It will be the centrists who'll make the difference," declared liberal GOP New York Representative Sherwood Boehlert shortly after the election was resolved. Added Delaware Republican Mike Castle, "We want to be more active than we have in the past." But not only have the GOP moderates not been more active; they've been downright comatose. "The most remarkable story so far this year is the difference between moderate Republicans in the House and in the Senate," says a top House Democratic leadership aide. "Lincoln Chafee and Jim Jeffords and the folks over there have made themselves the key players.... There's not a word from [the House moderates].... They're just sheep."

HOUSE MODERATES SAY that because their Senate counterparts fought the White House on the tax plan—passing a smaller $1.2 trillion cut—they didn't need to. They voted for the full $1.6 trillion, they claim, knowing that a House-Senate reconciliation committee would eventually whittle it down to something more to their liking. "We talked to some of these senators [beforehand]," says Morella. "We pretty much knew the tax cut would be changed."

Why didn't Morella and her fellow moderates vote their consciences—and, presumably, their left-leaning constituents' wishes? Part of the explanation is the institutional difference between the House and Senate, whose members are inherently more powerful and independent. That's especially true with the upper chamber tied 50-50—a deadlock that lets any one holdout extort enormous concessions for his vote. (Witness the $70 billion in special-education money Jeffords secured from Democrats in exchange for his opposition to Bush's tax cut.)

But the difference isn't only institutional; it's also personal. Unlike the weak and fractured Senate GOP leadership, House leaders—principally Majority Whip Tom "The Hammer" DeLay—have established near-total control over their flock. Over the past few years, their primary method for dealing with moderates has been intimidation. On key votes, House whips demand that potential defectors sign pledges of support in ink. "The pressure is extraordinary," says an anti-tax-cut activist who has seen it up close. "It's not a joke about 'The Hammer.' When they go to the floor, they are surrounded by the leaders."

DeLay and Company constantly remind moderates of the costs of bucking the party line. No GOP centrist holds a significant committee chairmanship, for instance. And last year, when House leaders passed over New Jersey's Marge Roukema to head the influential Banking Committee for a

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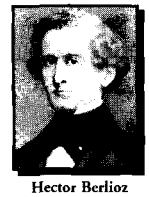
Hector Berlioz

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more junior rival, Ohio's Michael Oxley, many suspected ideology played a major role. In primary fights, too—an area where party leaders traditionally remain neutral—House GOP leaders have conspicuously thrown their support to conservatives running against moderates. Last year, DeLay and House Majority Leader Dick Armey backed conservative former Representative Dick Pappas (infamous for singing the insipid homage "Twinkle, Twinkle, Kenneth Starr" on the House floor) in his victory over moderate Dick Zimmer, also a former congressman from southern New Jersey. By last March, House moderates had grown so frustrated with the National Republican Congressional Committee's support for right-wing groups and candidates that they threatened to stop fund-raising for the party.

This inside pressure from the House leadership is complemented by growing outside pressure from conservative activists. Late 1999 saw the formation of the Club for Growth, an independent political action committee primarily dedicated to replacing moderates with pro-tax-cut conservatives. During the 2000 elections, the Club, headed by ardent supply-sider Stephen Moore and funded largely by anonymous Wall Street donors, spent about $250,000 worth of advertising and direct contributions on behalf of Roukema's primary challenger, right-wing New Jersey Assemblyman Scott Garrett. The Club also publicly toyed with supporting a primary challenge to Boehlert. Roukema's narrow victory and Boehlert's weeks of uncertainty, Moore says gleefully, "spooked the moderates." And when it came time to vote on the Bush tax cut, Club officials called fence-sitting House Republicans and warned them that their decisions would be closely examined when the group decided which GOP incumbents to try to unseat next year. "A lot of these guys were calling us back personally," Moore explains. "They knew exactly who we were." The results were even better than Moore had hoped: "If a year or two ago I told you that we could get every House Republican to vote for a trillion-and-a-half-dollar tax cut, that you'd get the Roukemas and Castles and Morellas to vote for a cut of that magnitude, you'd say that was never going to happen." (Although the Club has tried to intimidate moderate senators as well—it's already running ads against Jeffords and Chafee, for example—it's having little success, partly because the huge expenses of their statewide campaigns make it harder for a single group to affect the outcome, and partly because senators only come up for reelection every six years.)

Having supported the size and, with some exceptions, the structure of Bush's tax cut (Morella, for instance, voted against eliminating the estate tax), GOP House moderates have rendered themselves all but powerless in the jockeying over a budget compromise, which will now take place largely in the Senate. But they say they'll wield influence on other issues. With some House Democrats growing squeamish about campaign finance reform, moderate Republicans could ultimately hold the balance of power. On the environment, where Bush's perceived extremism has put enviro-friendly Republicans on the defensive, moderates hint they might break with the administration. But that's what they once said about the tax cut, too. "Republican moderates [in the House] have always talked about bucking their leadership," says a Democratic aide wearily. "But they don't." ■

AT&T's First Amendment problem, and ours.

Costly

By BRENDAN I. KOERNER

WHEN YOU THINK "First Amendment martyr," you don't exactly think AT&T. It's a safe bet that few executives at the telecom giant tote ACLU membership cards or pace their office corridors reciting the lyrics to "Fight the Power." But AT&T has decided that channeling William Kunstler is a shrewd (if deeply dishonest) way to ward off government regulation. And, incredibly, it's working.

In July 1999, AT&T filed a lawsuit in Broward County, Florida, claiming its First Amendment rights were under siege. At issue was the use of "broadband" cable lines—wires that now carry cable television but are capable of carrying telephone, cable, and Internet data simultaneously. AT&T owns the lines in Broward County, and officials there had ordered the company to give competing Internet service providers access to the wires for a reasonable fee. According to AT&T, by dictating what content traveled over its wires, Broward's ordinance trampled on its right to free speech.

Although local authorities have long regulated use of local telephone lines—for instance, compelling the Baby Bells to let service providers like America Online use their pipes—a Florida court sided with AT&T. In a surprisingly strident 27-page opinion issued last November, Judge Donald Middlebrooks compared Broward's officials to Henry VIII, who required printers to obtain royal licenses. Unless regulators could prove a compelling reason for AT&T to open its cable to outsiders, he concluded, the company should be free to operate its broadband network without interference. Rather than appeal and face a pricey and protracted legal struggle, Broward County decided this April to repeal its ordinance altogether.

That was very unfortunate. Because there is an extremely good reason for laws like the one Broward County passed: They prevent companies like AT&T from developing monopolies over Internet access. If somebody's First Amendment rights are at stake here, it's not AT&T—it's the individuals whose access to information a monopoly could restrict. By giving in, Broward set a precedent that could scare off other local authorities considering similar regulations. And, while the federal government could still try to step in, the Bush administration isn't likely to. As a result, AT&T may soon monopolize broadband cable—and with it much of the nation's Internet access—thus turning cyberspace into the equivalent of a restaurant that serves only Pepsi.

To understand why, you need to understand all the subtle

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ways Internet service providers can control the content their subscribers see. An Internet service provider—whether it's a large company, like Earthlink, or one of the nation's 6,000-plus local outfits—can block access to certain sites, or even whole portions of the World Wide Web. More subtly, it can steer users toward favored sites or brands. Sound overly conspiratorial? It isn't. AOL filters out pornography and, with it, some medical and mainstream artistic sites. Roadrunner, the fledgling broadband service owned and operated by Time Warner, is notorious for assailing users with pop-up plugs for CNN and Warner Brothers cartoons.

THIS ISN'T A big problem right now, because most people still use telephone lines to access the Internet. Although the owners of those lines might be tempted to force users to go through their service providers—for example, Verizon might want Verizon telephone customers to use only Verizon's Internet service—local government regulations prohibit them from doing so. As a result, people can choose among a wide variety of companies providing access to the Internet. They can shop around for the best price or the kind of access that best suits their purposes. And it also means they aren't prisoners of their providers' editorial control. If you don't like AOL's filters, you can simply subscribe to a service that doesn't have them.

The danger is that, because of the way technology is developing, this freedom may not last. Broadband represents a whole new chapter in Internet usage. Because of its huge capacity for carrying information, it will soon be possible to bundle television, pay-per-view movies, World Wide Web data, and interactive communication all in one package. This means broadband users will have one screen through which they can view ESPN's "SportsCenter" (the network's sports news show), read articles on ESPN.com (the network's website), and buy replica fan gear in the ESPN TeamStore (the network's online shopping site). The catch is that the information has to travel over existing residential broadband lines, 80 percent of which AT&T now owns. If the government regulated cable lines the way it does phone lines—by prohibiting the owner of those lines from restricting who can use them to provide Internet service—this would be no big deal. But that's exactly what Broward County tried to do—and Judge Middlebrooks said it was unconstitutional.

AT&T, of course, insists it has no interest in restricting information. It notes that its existing Internet service providers (such as Excite@Home) allow users "unlimited possibilities" to roam the Internet. But the company will be sorely tempted to hedge on that promise in the coming years. It has spent more than $100 billion gobbling up America's cable lines and acquiring major pipe-laying outfits like MediaOne and TCI. Since subscription fees from Internet users will probably be inadequate to recoup that massive investment, AT&T will have to find new ways of making money. And peddling preferential treatment is the obvious way to go.

In the most likely scenario, AT&T would sell the rights to prominent placement on Web portals, faster links, better access, and so on—all for a steep price. Companies with deep pockets would gobble up these premiums. Less affluent content providers would end up in a cyberspace "slow lane" or denied service altogether. Nonprofit organizations, for example, often enjoy steep discounts from independent service providers. Will AT&T be so eager to provide affordable, effective wiring to, say, a consumer group critical of the telecom industry? What about a political candidate running against one of AT&T's Capitol Hill allies? Or a magazine that publishes articles lampooning corporate free-speech claims? In the hands of a monopoly like AT&T, surely this sort of control would do far more damage to free speech than the kinds of regulations Broward County had proposed.

In its defense, AT&T and other opponents of open-access laws insist there will be no monopoly—that consumers unhappy with the choices available through broadband can always use alternative technologies to connect to the Internet, just as they do now. There are, for example, digital subscriber lines, or DSL, which phone companies offer. But, for residential consumers, DSL service is more expensive, available in fewer households, and less equipped to handle video content. AT&T cites wireless technology as another possible competitor to its broadband service, but it may be a decade before such connections provide broadband's speed. Meanwhile, as broadband becomes more popular, more and more content will be available only through broadband technology (in the same way that some websites today are set up so you can't really navigate them with a standard modem). The supposed alternatives notwithstanding, people interested in certain kinds of content would have no choice but to get it through broadband, which would mean using AT&T's cable lines.

Although the Florida ruling may chill state action elsewhere, successful federal intervention is still possible—in theory. Last June the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that broadband-enabled cables do indeed provide a telecommunications service, potentially clearing the way for the Federal Communications Commission to regulate them. (The ruling was not entirely clear on this point, since federal regulation was not the matter at hand in the case.) But the FCC has long maintained a hands-off approach to cable television; and its new chairman, Michael Powell, isn't about to change course, even though cable itself is about to undergo a huge technological transformation. When pressed on the topic in February, Powell hemmed and hawed, then suggested that "openness is not always good." Two months later, in a speech to the National Association of Broadcasters, he declared that FCC restrictions on media ownership were "offensive to First Amendment values." The Broward County decision can only embolden him further by ostensibly giving him free-speech cover to stay out of the fray.

This will please opponents of broadband regulation and of government regulation more generally, who liken Broward-style laws to an appropriation of private property. But if the FCC lets AT&T have its way on broadband, it won't be standing up for the rights of a private entity; it will be forfeiting ownership of a public asset. It was the government, after all, that first developed the Internet, as a communication tool for Pentagon researchers. And it was

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university-based hackers who figured out how to mesh UNIX with Internet protocols, perfecting the guts that drive the World Wide Web. AT&T's role in broadband development consists of a smart business decision to buy up cable lines—a significant expense, to be sure, but not one that should trump the public's right to recoup its own investment. ■

For race in class.

Without Merit

By JEFFREY ROSEN

IN MY CRIMINAL PROCEDURE class this year, we tried to decide whether a driver who has been pulled over by the police because of his race has suffered a constitutional injury. "The problem isn't being pulled over," said one African American student. "It's what happens after. You have to do this step-'n'-fetch-it routine, showing that you're subordinate to the officer, to make sure he won't arrest you. Even if the officer is black, it's incredibly degrading."

The comment changed the way the class and I thought about the constitutionality of racial profiling. And it illustrates a proposition that now strikes me as obvious: There can be a meaningful correlation between racial diversity and diversity of viewpoints in the classroom. Before I started teaching, I was more skeptical of this correlation—and expressed some skepticism in these pages. And, unfortunately, some judges, who have not experienced the classroom dynamic I've described, remain skeptical. At the end of March, a federal district judge in Michigan, Bernard A. Friedman, struck down the University of Michigan Law School's affirmative action program, noting that "the connection between race and viewpoint is tenuous, at best." If the Supreme Court ultimately accepts this reasoning and forbids affirmative action in all public universities, it will not only be substituting its untested judgment for the classroom experience of teachers across the nation. It will also enmesh the courts in an impossible effort to disentangle the relationship between racial diversity and viewpoint diversity—a relationship that, as recent voting rights decisions show, is best defined by the political process.

The connection between racial diversity and viewpoint diversity is central to the legal future of affirmative action because of the peculiarities of Justice Lewis Powell's compromise opinion in *Regents of the University of California* v. *Bakke*. The real reason most public universities have affirmative action programs is that they feel it would be politically untenable to admit a class much less diverse than the state as a whole. But Powell rejected this representational justification, calling it "discrimination for its own sake." Instead, he announced, universities may legitimately seek a racially diverse student body because the diversity of viewpoints that resulted would have educational benefits for all students. For nearly 20 years after *Bakke* was decided, everyone accepted Powell's reasoning as binding Supreme Court precedent. But, in 1996, a Texas appellate court decided that this part of Powell's opinion hadn't commanded five votes in 1978 and wouldn't command five votes in the Supreme Court today, a prediction Judge Friedman embraced as well.

In trying to predict how the Supreme Court would decide *Bakke* today, Friedman and the Texas court have acted more like pundits than lower-court judges (and in 1978 five justices clearly joined Powell's conclusion that "the State has a substantial interest that may legitimately be served by a properly devised admission program involving the competitive consideration of race and ethnic origin"). But, regardless of how you interpret the constitutional history of affirmative action, its future will be decided by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who has inherited Powell's position in the middle of a divided Court. For this reason, defenders of affirmative action are intent on convincing O'Connor that there is, in fact, a meaningful connection between race and viewpoint.

On this point, the University of Michigan's litigation strategy may not have helped its case. Instead of sticking to the modest claim that there's often some correlation between racial diversity and viewpoint diversity in the classroom, the university made a more ambitious argument: that students who experience the most racial diversity in and out of the classroom show the greatest academic and intellectual growth. The university submitted a study by Patricia Gurin, a psychology professor, who reported that students who attend ethnic-studies courses and participate in racial-awareness workshops are "better prepared to become active participants in our pluralistic, democratic society." But, as the National Association of Scholars pointed out in a rebuttal, Gurin doesn't establish how many ethnic minorities, if any, actually attended the workshops; and, in any event, ethnic-studies workshops surely aren't what Powell had in mind when he talked about the benefits of an integrated classroom.

Because those benefits aren't always reflected in grades, test scores, and other tangible measures of educational achievement, the National Association of Scholars, like Judge Friedman, concludes that "intellectual diversity bears no obvious or necessary relationship to racial diversity." But this claim is too strong. It's true that, in some classes, there's no clear correlation; hearing African Americans talk about their experiences with police is more important in a criminal procedure class than in a corporate tax class. Moreover, the University of Michigan, which gives preference to some racial and ethnic groups and not others, isn't interested in a complete diversity of viewpoints. It might be useful to hear from native Puerto Rican students in a classroom discussion about annexation cases, for example, but the University of Michigan doesn't appear to distinguish between island and mainland students of Puerto Rican descent. Nevertheless, the constitutional question isn't whether it's possible, with unlimited resources and a very different applicant pool, to achieve an even greater diversity of views than would emerge in an affirmative action system that uses broad racial categories as crude proxy for viewpoint diversity. The question is whether minority students with very different political and social backgrounds bring enough of the distinctive

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perspective that comes from being a minority in America to create real educational benefits for everyone.

POWELL HELD THAT, as long as universities avoid explicit quotas and two-track admissions systems (in which minority candidates are compared only with each other), they may use race as a "plus factor" in admissions decisions. His opinion has been justly criticized for failing to define how much race consciousness is too much—at what point does a plus factor become the predominant factor? But, in the two decades since *Bakke*, it has become obvious that federal courts are not institutionally equipped to identify this point with precision.

In this sense, affirmative action cases teach the same lesson as the Supreme Court's voting rights cases: that race and viewpoint are intertwined in such complicated ways that courts can't possibly disentangle them. In a series of decisions beginning with *Shaw* v. *Reno* in 1993, the Court held that state legislatures could use race as one of several factors, but not as the predominant factor, in drawing legislative districts. Four conservative justices made it clear they would never allow districts to be drawn in order to maximize the voting strength of racial minorities. Four liberal justices made it clear they would allow these districts to be drawn without close judicial supervision. This meant that every voting district in the country had to await the reaction of the swing justice, O'Connor, whose criterion for distinguishing permissible districts from impermissible ones seemed to be: You know it when you see it.

But, on April 18, Justice O'Connor finally decided that she could live with the redrawn North Carolina district she had first expressed concern about in *Shaw* v. *Reno* nearly a decade ago. She provided the fifth vote for Justice Breyer's opinion, which concluded that politics, not race, had been the predominant factor in drawing the district. Breyer emphasized that because African Americans in the state register and vote Democratic more than 95 percent of the time, it was hard to distinguish a legislature's effort to create a majority-black district from a legislature's effort to create a safe Democratic one. And because white registered Democrats more frequently cross over to vote Republican than African American registered Democrats do, a legislature trying to secure a safe Democratic seat could plausibly include more heavily African American precincts for political, not racial, reasons. "Race in this case correlates closely with political behavior," Breyer concluded, reasoning that judges should therefore give legislatures leeway to balance racial and political considerations without assuming one was predominant over the other.

Republicans, of course, don't dispute the close correlation between racial identification and political affiliation when it suits their interests. The same week the Supreme Court handed down its decision in the North Carolina case, New Jersey Republicans announced they were challenging the decision by the state apportionment commission, supported by some Democratic black and Hispanic state representatives, to reduce the minority population in three Essex County districts and redistribute it among several surrounding ones. It's been obvious since the early '90s that the Democratic strategy of creating as many minority districts as possible is a self-defeating way for the party to isolate its most reliable voters. Now that Democrats—at least in New Jersey—have finally come to their senses and decided to follow their political rather than ideological interests, it's the Republicans who are insisting that all black voters think and vote alike, and therefore can't be represented by whites.

BY TAKING THE opposite position in affirmative action cases and by pretending there is no meaningful connection between race and viewpoint, Republican judges and politicians may think they are eliminating race from the admissions process. But this is naïve; the political demand for racial diversity is too great to be resisted. What affirmative action's opponents are likely to do, ironically, is undermine meritocracy. The most alarming part of Judge Friedman's opinion is his suggestion that the University of Michigan should have experimented with "race-neutral" alternatives to affirmative action, including "decreasing the emphasis for all applicants on undergraduate GPA and LSAT scores, using a lottery system for all qualified applicants, or a system whereby a certain percentage of the top graduates from various colleges or universities are admitted." This abandonment of objective standards of academic measurement is precisely what has occurred in California, Florida, and Texas in the wake of initiatives and court decisions forbidding affirmative action. The political pressure to maintain the number of minorities in the states' flagship universities was so strong that, in February, the chancellor of the University of California called for the abolition of the SAT, and the Universities of Texas and Florida now guarantee admission to a certain percentage of all high school graduates in the state. These reforms may well turn the leading state universities into remedial academies. The quality of high schools varies so widely across the state of Texas, for instance, that the Austin campus, the flagship of the University of Texas system, is now admitting a lower caliber of applicants from *all* ethnic groups than it did under affirmative action, when exceptions were made primarily for African American and Hispanic students.

In arguing that affirmative action represents a lesser compromise of meritocratic standards than the alternatives that are almost certain to follow its elimination, I don't mean to deny that there are costs to broad generalizations about the connection between racial diversity and viewpoint diversity. One of the most committed conservative students in my recent constitutional law class was an African American woman who, like Clarence Thomas, bitterly resented the claim that African Americans think and vote alike. But her position, too, contributed to the diversity of the class. By presuming to identify the mystical point at which racial diversity does or doesn't lead to a richer classroom experience, Judge Friedman has interjected the federal courts into a complicated question of educational policy and social psychology best left to the University of Michigan. If the Supreme Court agrees with him, it will trigger an abandonment of objective admissions standards that may destroy America's great public universities. What an odd position for self-styled defenders of meritocracy to be applauding. ■

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Foggy Bottom takes over Israel policy.

State Unfair

By LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

IT WASN'T SUPPOSED to be this way. But two weeks ago the Bush administration issued the harshest American rebuke of Israel since, well, the last Bush administration. The reason it wasn't supposed to be this way is that George W. Bush genuinely sympathizes with the Jewish state. On the campaign trail, flanked by former Reagan administration officials with close ties to the Likud Party, he repeatedly distanced himself from the cajoling tactics and "evenhandedness" employed by his father and President Clinton. "The United States must not set artificial timetables," Bush said of the peace process, and the mantra soon became a staple of his campaign. During his first months in office, the Bush team announced it wouldn't appoint a special envoy to force the peace process forward; the White House put an end to CIA consultations with the Palestinian Authority and vetoed an anti-Israel resolution at the United Nations. Bush wouldn't even invite Yasir Arafat to the White House, admonishing him instead to "stop the violence."

So Israel's friends were more than a little surprised when the Bush team delivered the harshest censure of the Jewish state in a decade. The pretext arrived on April 17, when, to quiet Palestinian mortar fire from the Gaza Strip, Israeli forces occupied the two-square-mile area from which the shells had been launched. Secretary of State Colin Powell responded by publicly scolding Israel for its "excessive and disproportionate" response. (The Palestinian attacks he merely deemed "provocative.") Israel promptly withdrew its forces from Gaza. And, within hours, the shelling began anew.

What was the president thinking? Nothing, apparently—the reprimand was the brainchild of the State Department. The president's laudable decision not to micromanage the peace process has had an unintended—and unfortunate—consequence: the outsourcing of Middle East policy to Colin Powell. And Powell has passed the peace process even further down the bureaucratic food chain. At a dinner last week at the Israeli Embassy, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage noted that if President Truman had listened to the counsel of State Department professionals, there would be no Israel today. What he forgot to mention is that those are precisely the people Powell is listening to now.

State Department officials claimed they issued the reprimand because they were concerned that Israel was recapturing territory it had ceded to the Palestinians. Yet Israeli representatives had repeatedly told their American counterparts—specifically, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk and the National Security Council's Middle East point man, Bruce Reidel—that their forces would be in and out of Gaza within 24 hours. According to senior administration officials, Powell, too, knew the Israelis were pulling back when he issued his rebuke. So why would he create the impression

MATTHEW MARTIN

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that the United States had pressured Israel into retreating? "The point," says a high-level State Department official, "was to send a message to both sides, and [they] clearly got it."

But exactly what the message was meant to be depends on which side you ask. In failing to distinguish between aggression and self-defense, Powell's rebuke of Israel sounded like a General Assembly resolution. By contrast, in characterizing Palestinian rocket attacks against civilian targets as mere provocations, Powell eliminated any obligation to link punishment to offense. To the Palestinian targets of the Israeli raid, who promptly resumed lobbing shells into Israel, the message couldn't have been clearer: Continue the attacks—either Israel won't respond, for fear of eliciting another American rebuke, or it will, in which case its relations with Washington will suffer.

Who would compose such a message? Soon after Powell learned of the Israeli incursion, he directed the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) to pen a reprimand. Since outgoing Assistant Secretary of State Edward Walker was touring the Middle East, the task of overseeing the draft fell to the bureau's deputy, Richard Roth. The wording then wound its way up the State Department's chain of command, eventually landing on the desk of Richard Haass, Powell's director of policy planning and his principal Middle East adviser, who approved it. When a copy of the censure reached the White House, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice tempered the language somewhat. Finally, the secretary of state unloaded.

"This was an aberration," a senior Bush adviser insists. "In no way is it a precedent." Maybe so. But Powell relies far more on the counsel of State Department professionals and far less on political appointees than his predecessors did. In most instances, the distinction means little. But NEA continues to be staffed in part by diplomats who've never fully come to terms with America's special relationship with the Jewish state. Which is why successive administrations have refused to cede it control over Israel policy.

TRUE, IT'S NO LONGER 1947, and many of the State Department's "Arabists" are more likely to play dreidel than polo. But the assumptions of their predecessors remain canonical at NEA—for example, that the region's fundamental instability derives from Israel's abuse of the Palestinians or that close relations with Israel impede our broader interests in the Middle East. Typically, an NEA staffer drafted a memo a few months ago arguing that the United States shouldn't condemn the terrorist attack on the USS *Cole* while ignoring Israeli depredations in "the Occupied Territories" since "17 or so dead sailors does not compare to the 100 plus Palestinians who have died in recent weeks where we have remained silent." Such sentiments persist at NEA despite the fact that, beginning with the Nixon White House, one secretary of state after another has felt compelled to purge the bureau of Arabists who came to see the world through the eyes of their clients.

The last to do so, oddly enough, was the first Bush administration. Contrary to popular wisdom, former Secretary of State James Baker had little use for NEA and actually came close to breaking the bureau's back. Instead, he handed responsibility for Arab-Israeli affairs to the State Department's policy planning staff—particularly to its director, Dennis Ross, who continued managing the peace process under Clinton. While they pushed Israel into the bind it finds itself in today, what animated Ross and his colleagues wasn't animus toward the Jewish state. (In fact, Arabists accused them of coddling Israel.) Misguided though it proved to be, their presumption that enough Israeli concessions, "confidence-building measures," and "baby steps" would transform Arafat into a rational actor derived, if anything, from the theology of the Israeli left. But now the peace processors are history. And, rather than replace them with pro-Israel neoconservatives, as the Bush campaign hinted it would do, Powell is turning to Foggy Bottom's Arabists.

THE SUREST SIGN that Powell's rebuke offers a preview of further U.S. pressure is that, notwithstanding the administration's past insistence that it had no use for a special envoy to the peace talks, the secretary of state has been lobbying for exactly that. Moreover, unlike the presidential appointment that Ross carried, Powell would like the new position folded into NEA. According to *The Jerusalem Post*, whose report several Bush advisers confirm, Powell favors either former NEA Assistant Secretary Edward Djerejian or current policy planning director Haass for the post. The choice of either would spell the end of W.'s honeymoon with the Jewish state.

Djerejian is the walking embodiment of the Near East bureau he directed during the first Bush presidency. A quintessential Arabist and former ambassador to Syria, Djerejian was tapped by Baker to direct NEA after the Bush team sacked his predecessor for staggering ineptitude during the run-up to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait (which NEA declined to caution Saddam Hussein against). Djerejian functioned as less an architect than an implementer of Baker's policies. But that was enough to earn him the enmity of Israeli officials. And when the Clinton administration dispatched him to Tel Aviv as ambassador in 1993, his tenure proved disastrous: Ross muscled him aside, the Israelis distrusted him, and officials from the United States and Israel reportedly excluded him from their bilateral talks. Just months into his appointment, Djerejian resigned, soon after taking up residence as director of the James Baker Institute of Public Policy, an Arab- and oil-industry-funded shrine to the former secretary of state on the campus of Rice University. Today, Djerejian says he has "a very close relationship with the administration and Secretary of State Powell" and freely admits he has "been advising the administration as it has requested." And it has been requesting on an almost-daily basis, claim Bush advisers, who say Djerejian has already traveled to Washington to discuss his prospective slot.

Compared with Haass, however, Djerejian sounds like Golda Meir. Haass isn't a product of NEA. But neither is he, strictly speaking, a peace processor. He's an Israel processor. During the first Bush administration, Haass managed to distinguish himself as the bad cop on the Israel beat—no small accomplishment in an administration that enjoyed better relations with the Soviet Union. He directed Middle East

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policy at the National Security Council alongside his mentor Brent Scowcroft, whose animus toward Israel persists even today (he blames it for "trashing the Oslo accords" and accused Clinton of applying a "double standard" to the Jewish state). From the NSC, Haass authored some of Bush and Baker's indictments of the Israeli government. He also played a key role in devising the strategy of withholding U.S. loan guarantees in order to force Israel to undergo what Haass called "behavior modification."

Haass's Middle East record earned him plenty of detractors. But it also made him new friends. After the 1992 elections, he landed consulting gigs and board directorships with oil companies doing business in the Middle East, whose funds he eventually brought with him to the Brookings Institution, where the same corporations helped bankroll his briefs on the futility of economic sanctions (see "Drill Sergeant," TNR, March 26). But Haass spent the Clinton years inveighing against more than just embargoes. He also scored Israel for inciting Palestinian violence, and the Clinton administration for taking an insufficiently hard line with Israel. Today, he claims the intervening years have transformed his views. Alas, his collusion in the Gaza rebuke suggests the transformation has been less than complete.

Of course, none of this would matter if the White House didn't defer so eagerly to Powell, and he, in turn, to the pinstripes beneath him. There exist, after all, alternative viewpoints within the administration. Rice's colleagues say she doesn't share the State Department's inclinations on Arab-Israeli issues. The one NSC staffer who does, Clinton holdover Bruce Reidel, will soon be forced to divide his Middle East portfolio with neoconservative strategist Zalmay Khalilzad. Cheney's staff includes vocal boosters of the Jewish state. And though the Pentagon plays a narrow role in the peace process, its senior officials constitute Israel's closest friends on the Bush team. Finally, there's Bush himself. He may not know the difference between Greeks and Grecians. But, whether the issue has been China, Taiwan, North Korea, or the Middle East peace process, his foreign policy inclinations have proved more sound than the advice of his diplomatic counselors. Indeed, Israel might even be allowed to defend herself if the president were in charge of his Middle East policy. Too bad Colin Powell is. ■

How America learned to hate bullies.

Bully Pulpit

By BENJAMIN SOSKIS

PITY THE POOR BULLY. For decades he flourished, thanks to a national consensus that boys would be boys and a little roughhousing couldn't hurt. We indulged the noogie, winked at the charley horse, and thought it sort of funny when the high school tough crammed the band geek into the locker. Poking, taunting, name-calling—at least in modest doses—were considered a normal, if sometimes trying, part of adolescent development. One gave up one's lunch money not only in fear, but with a certain deference to the rules of the game.

No longer. If the bully was once an accepted part of a basically healthy educational environment, he is now the embodiment of a youth culture so cruel that it leads persecuted children to kill. "Think back to third grade, sixth grade, ninth grade," intoned *The San Diego Union-Tribune* recently. "Maybe you were too short, too thin, too fat, too tall, too dumb, too smart. Too ... whatever 'they' decided. They who tripped you, mocked you, grabbed your lunch. Stole your dignity, your confidence, your spirit." In March, the *Los Angeles Times* spoke of bullies as a national pestilence: "If we could only round them up and herd them into detention, then haul their parents in for counseling, maybe we could isolate the menace of bullies in our midst." That same month, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation released a survey showing that bullying has become schoolchildren's primary concern, surpassing drugs and discrimination. Attorney General John Ashcroft has lamented our "onerous culture of bullying." State legislatures in Georgia, New Hampshire, and Vermont have passed laws cracking down on it. And, last week, the much-publicized release by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) of a massive study of bullying seemed to confirm our worst fears: Of the more than 15,000 students surveyed in grades six through ten, a full 30 percent said they had been involved in bullying, either as victims or as perpetrators; 17.2 percent said it happened at least once a week.

This sudden national outcry against bullying has its roots in the spate of school shootings in recent years—in Jonesboro, Littleton, Santee, and so on—several of which were conducted by students tormented by long-term harassment. And the outcry is, in many ways, a promising development—a cousin of our increased awareness of sexual harassment, bigotry, and other offenses. But, like many social movements born of tragedy, the anti-bullying movement has been characterized by widespread overreaction. Schools have outlawed dodgeball because it encourages bullies. They've cracked down on offenses as minor as a menacing look or a nasty gesture—because, as one California school district argued, these affronts "can be precursors to bigger conflicts." Every school is seen as a potential Columbine, every disgruntled student a potential Andy Williams.

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In reality, there's reason to believe our bullying "crisis" is exaggerated—that, in the wake of Columbine, we're losing the capacity to distinguish between the imponderable tragedy of a school shooting and the petty, everyday cruelties that inevitably accompany adolescence. What's more, in our overwrought efforts to stamp out those mundane cruelties, we may actually end up making them worse.

ANY DISCUSSION OF bullying is complicated by the fact that, because there has been so little research on the subject until recently, it's difficult to know whether it's getting worse. But the perception that schools are becoming increasingly brutal is undermined by the fact that, according to a number of major indexes, youth violence is declining. The Justice Policy Institute reports that youth crime is at its lowest level in a quarter-century; the number of violent deaths occurring in or near school has decreased nearly 70 percent since 1992, from 55 to 16 per year. "To the extent that there is any trend at all, it is certainly not up," says the institute's director, Vincent Schiraldi. William Modzeleski, director of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program at the Department of Education, agrees, noting that schools are among the safest places for our kids to be.

How does this square with the recent studies that find widespread bullying in schools? It's basically a matter of definition—and the anti-bullying movement has broadened that definition beyond physical violence, threats, and taunting to include all potentially hurtful social interactions. The Michigan Education Association, for example, defines bullying to include spreading rumors and social exclusion—so refusing to include a klutz in a recess basketball game is a form of persecution. Ronald Stephens, executive director of the National School Safety Center and a leading proponent of anti-bullying programs, argues that "psychological intimidation can be as damaging as physical assaults." Therefore, he recommends that "hard looks" and "stare downs" be added to the actionable offenses in student codes of conduct. Last May, the state of New Hampshire enacted a law defining bullying as "conduct which subjects a pupil to insults, taunts or challenges, whether verbal or physical in nature, which are likely to intimidate or provoke a violent or disorderly response," and required schools to report all such incidents to the superintendent. But, as the chairman of one county school board complained, "What they define as bullying, it basically ends up being almost anything." The situation is particularly complex for girls, who, researchers agree, torment each other through subtler, less physical methods of "relational aggression," such as gossip or threats to withdraw friendship if certain conditions are not met.

Even the vaunted NICHD survey illustrates the problem. Although it tried admirably to differentiate among particular forms of bullying, these distinctions were lost in the furor about the overall statistics. According to Tonja Nansel, the study's lead author, those overall numbers were based on the following definition: "We say a student is being bullied when another student, or group of students, say or do nasty or unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a student is teased repeatedly in a way he or she doesn't like, but it is not bullying when two students of the same strength quarrel or fight." Among the respondents, 10.6 percent said they had been bullied, 13 percent said they'd acted as bullies, and 6.3 percent said they'd been both bullies *and* bullied. But buried within the study's broad definition of bullying were numbers that mediate any sense of crisis: Just over half of those who'd been bullied—or about 9 percent of the total sample—said the bullying included a physical component, such as "hitting, slapping, or pushing." And of those bullied, only about 15 percent—a total of one student in a class of 40—said he or she was subjected to physical bullying once a week or more.

BY DEFINING BULLYING so broadly, the anti-bullying movement risks pathologizing behaviors that, however unpleasant, are in some sense normal parts of growing up and learning how to interact in the world. And this may not be in the long-term interest of either the bullies or the bullied. For the latter, zero-tolerance anti-bullying programs could leave them unprepared to assimilate the often unpleasant realities of social interaction without conceiving all hostility or peer rejection as traumatic. It's a similar danger to one already confronted by the self-esteem movement, a close relative of the anti-bullying effort. Initially, social scientists believed low self-esteem was often at the root of violent behavior. But, in recent years, a very different analysis has emerged: that unrealistically *high* self-esteem can lead to violence when challenged by negative feedback. Similarly, with bullying—though it is undoubtedly true that, for too long, parents and teachers failed to recognize the psychic trauma a child could experience from peer rejection—we can overcompensate if we do not train children to deal with the social slights that accompany adult life. In both cases, the danger is that, by trying to insulate children from harsh realities, we leave them more vulnerable and potentially more hostile when those realities inevitably intrude.

Anti-bullying researchers answer this challenge by arguing that, in fact, adults are never asked to tolerate the types of abuse we condone on the playground. According to Debra Pepler, a child psychologist at York University in Toronto, "[A]lthough there may be people in my work environment who I wouldn't want to take home for dinner on Friday night, I don't tell them they can't sit beside me in a staff room, I don't say they can't be on a committee or they can't come to a meeting with me. Because as adults, we come to recognize and live with differences and we learn to live with relationships that don't need to be close friendships." But as adults, we do not stop excluding others or gossiping about them; we simply grow more adept at cloaking and interpreting the signals we send. There are plenty of ways one adult can humiliate and ridicule another in the workplace without calling him "Fatso." School is an opportunity to teach what forms of behavior should never be tolerated and what forms inevitably must be. So, as with a baby who, in the moment after a fall, looks to his mother for a cue for his response, it is important to know when to rush up and coddle a child and when to laugh as if it were nothing.

But aggressive anti-bullying efforts may pose an even

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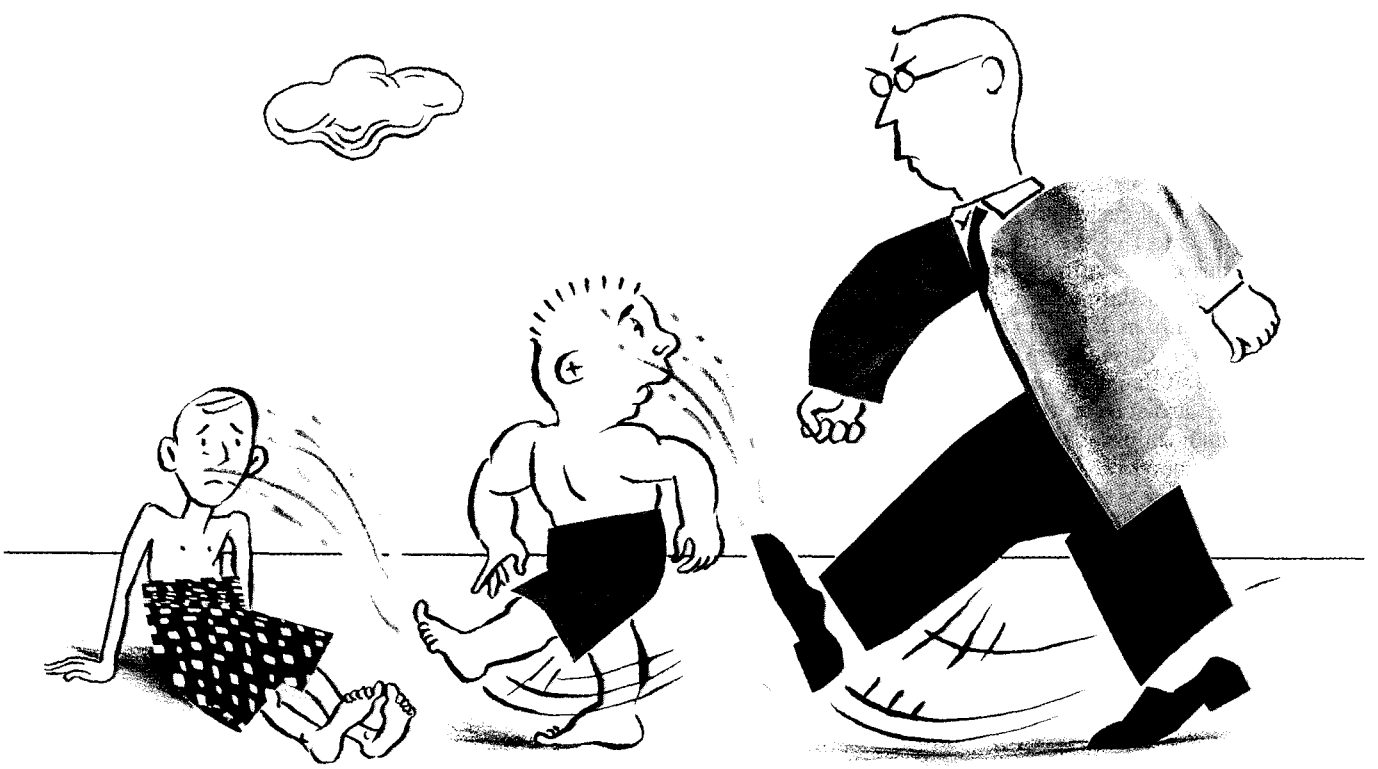
greater risk for the bullies themselves, who are increasingly vilified. This is the ironic reversal at the movement's core: Though launched onto the national stage by acts of extreme school violence, it considers the perpetrators of that violence not as bullies but as the victims of bullies. The actions of the school shooters are explained through references to their upbringing, environment, and status as victims. The anti-bullying movement rarely labels them obnoxious or evil—even when they espouse racist or anti-Semitic views, seem to court peer antagonism, or relish the attention their violent outbursts bestow upon them. The bullies who theoretically drove them to violence, however, get no such free ride: They're simply unfeeling jerks, popular kids wanting to demonstrate their social dominance of the shy or awkward.

This is an unfortunate bias considering what we know about the psychology of bullies, specifically that they're often not so far removed from those they torment. According to recent studies, the line between the bullies and the bullied is often blurred, and the most troubled children fall into both categories. According to Pepler, those children "have significant problems with anxiety and depression and what are called internalizing disorders, as well as with problems with aggression and delinquency." In a 1999 study of Finnish students, depression was just as common among the bullies as among the bullied, and the former were even more likely to contemplate suicide. Bullies have high rates of truancy and are likely to come from troubled families. According to a pioneer of bullying research, Norwegian psychologist Dan Olweus, though bullies are usually well-liked by their peers when they're young, when they enter high school, where physical aggression is less tolerated, they are often shunned and forced to socialize with other aggressive children.

Given this profile, it is deeply counterproductive to treat bullies the way some in the anti-bullying movement propose—by stigmatizing them as fundamentally alien from their innocent classmates. There are already accounts of anti-bullying programs ostracizing the more belligerent and unruly students in class, creating exactly the sort of exclusionary social dynamic the programs claim to combat—but this time, in an inversion that would make Nietzsche cringe, with the meek on top. A parent of a second-grader in Casper, Wyoming, complained that her son became severely depressed when he was not voted into his class's Caring Community, a bully-proofing program in which students elect their peers based on whom they consider respectful and responsible. His mother called the program a "popularity contest" and told a local newspaper, "I've seen kids leaving the school crying because they didn't get into the Caring Community. You should see the devastation in their eyes."

You would hope anti-bullying activists would try to help these students rather than demonize them. And some do. The best anti-bullying programs—the ones that have been shown, in the limited research to date, to genuinely reduce school violence—do not isolate particular children. Rather, they speak to the student body as a whole, encouraging peers and bystanders to intervene when they think it is appropriate and making sure students have particular adults they can talk to when they feel especially troubled. These programs have learned much from the lessons of Columbine and Santee—about heeding warning signs from the bullies and bullied alike without overreacting to everyday slights; about the importance of parents, teachers, and administrators not lumping children into simplistic binary categories; and, perhaps most crucially of all, about how to teach children to differentiate between the kind of social injury they must learn to endure and the kind that we, as a society, must ensure they never have to. ■



MATTHEW MARTIN

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Checkmating and Mating

RATHER QUIETLY, WITHOUT much show-biz blaring of tin trumpets, John Turturro has been building an acting career as varied as the times and his endowments will allow. He entered film in 1984 and soon began to play low lifes, as in *Five Corners*; he then moved on to the gentle lovelorn shopkeeper in *Jungle Fever*; the stylized antics of *Barton Fink*; the title role in *Mac*, a film that he wrote and directed about his carpenter father; the nerdy contestant in *Quiz Show*; a Primo Levi protagonist in *The Truce*; and now—allowing for a few dozen roles along the way that I have omitted—he arrives at Vladimir Nabokov. Not many of Turturro's contemporaries (he was born in 1957) have sought comparable challenges. A low bow of acknowledgment is due to him before discussing his performance in **The Luzhin Defence** (Sony Pictures Classics). (The English version of the novel omits the hero's name in the title, though Nabokov used it in the original Russian.)

Luzhin is the scion of a wealthy White Russian family who, as a boy, had been introduced to chess by his mother's sister, with whom his father was having an affair. Thus his chess passion began in an ambiance of tension. The boy quickly showed near-genius at the game, and through the book Nabokov interweaves Luzhin's juvenile exploits with his mature chess triumphs. Most of the story takes place at a luxurious resort hotel on Lake Como in Mussolini's Italy, where Luzhin is involved not only in a world championship match to be played there, but in a romance with the daughter of a White Russian family also staying at the hotel. Nabokov posits Luzhin somewhere in the vicinity of Dostoevsky's Alexei in *The Gambler*, burning with two passions.

The man presented by Turturro is quite different physically from Nabokov's Luzhin (who is "too stout and flabby for his years"). Peter Berry, the screen adapter, has made Luzhin a slim, dark introvert, "normal" enough to fall in love, to make love even while in the turmoil of preparation for the chess match. Although he is as moody and manic as the original, and equally unaware of the way that his caprices and obsessions are hurting himself and others, this Luzhin is changed from a physically odd character with powers of attraction to a quasi-Byronic figure. Turturro gives the role all the fire and the jaggedness within his grasp—it is a total commitment—but the sheer magnetism that this mad, impassioned genius ought to have is simply beyond him. (Where was Ralph Fiennes?) The eccentricities are within Turturro's reach, but not the charisma to justify a young woman's devotion despite his eccentricities. His lack of sexual personality reduces her passion to something less than Wagnerian madness and makes her devotion seem arbitrary, contrived. This hurts especially at the end, which has been converted to a sort of redemption, untrue to Nabokov and incredible to the audience.

Yet there is a certain enjoyment in the film, partly because of the sumptuous environments, past and present, and because Marleen Gorris, the director, has created a sense of flow and texture; and she makes the most of the striking "character" faces of her supporting cast. Gorris, who is Dutch, directed two early films, *A Question of Silence* and *Broken Mirrors*, that were intended to be feminist bombshells but weren't. She then made *Antonia's Line*, a winning ode to matriarchy, and proceeded to *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which she attempted, with mild success, to see the world through womanly eyes.

The Luzhin Defence has no such feminist, even womanly, concerns. Its women are all fixed on men's wants and protocols and try to observe them. This is especially true of Natalia, Luzhin's inamorata (played by Emily Watson, who is not quite as brimming with fey sensibility as she believes). Gorris does include one subtext that is, subtly, political. Most of the major characters at the resort hotel are White Russians, and they are shown to be completely at ease in fascist Italy, with black-shirted officers ever in the background.

Despite Turturro's courage and address, and despite Gorris's suave directing, the picture evolves as a design, not a moving experience. Nabokov's novel is so intensely centered in Luzhin that the story is almost imprisoned, desperate, in the cavern of his being—or beings. (There is a photograph of Nabokov taken at Montreux in 1964, at about the time that the English translation of this book appeared, in which chess pieces loom large in the foreground and he looks as distraught as his latter-day Luzhin.) But the film lifts Luzhin out of centrality and puts him before us as an agonist, only one character—though the major one—in a drama, so that we watch a madman disintegrating, cannot reasonably hope for his satisfactory triumph or defeat, and are irritated by the papier-mâché finish. Nabokov's novel is an internal adventure; the Gorris-Berry film is imperfect theater.

Bridget Jones's Diary (Miramax) is here! Apparently this was big news in Britain, where Helen Fielding's comic novels and newspaper columns had enthralled many, particularly young office-working women, with their recognition quotient ("Isn't that just like So and So in our place?") and the scrumptious screwing. ("Oh, she never would ... would she?") Bridget works in the publicity department of a London publisher and worries about her weight, her exercising, her singleness punctuated with affairs. Possibly because of the last matter, her mother's extra-marital adventure, about which Mom keeps telling her, is a particular nuisance. Bridget's own love life is torn—insufficiently torn—between her handsome young boss and a stuffy young barrister whom she meets at her parents' house. The office scenes ring only too true, the sexing around is breezy, and the combination of the two brought a special grin to my grizzled cheeks. Back in the first half of the twentieth century there was a comic strip called "Tillie the Toiler," which dealt with the job life and private life of an office worker named Tillie, who was much like Bridget, except that Tillie's romantic involvements were virginal. At the same time there were, in hush-hush circulation, crummy comic books containing "Tillie the Toiler" strips crammed with vivid sex. This new film was particularly amusing because the glorious advance of civilization has made it possible to combine the two versions of "Tillie" in one Bridget Jones.

The director is a former documentary maker, Sharon Maguire, who quite clearly relished the job so much that, from time to time, we can almost hear her chuckling. Her one lapse—and that of the screenwriters, Fielding, Andrew Davies, and Richard Curtis—is a fistfight between the two rivals for Bridget. This low-grade movie cliché is plunked, for no

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good reason, into a quite enjoyable, intelligent comedy.

The handsome boss is Hugh Grant, much more than believable as a womanizer who makes no secret of his womanizing even as he moves in on still another woman. His rival is Colin Firth, who makes his stuffiness quite attractive. Renée Zellweger plays Bridget and gets something out of the role despite her affectations. Her basic idea of acting, as she showed in *Nurse Betty*, is to make cute faces. She is one of those actresses who apparently practice at home in front of a mirror. But some of the faces have appeal. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

Mind Over Material

MANY YEARS AGO, I wrote an article called "The Theater Is Losing Its Minds," which lamented the loss of intelligence on the modern stage. My educated friends, mostly non-theatergoers, admired the piece for exalting the value of mind over vulgar theatricalism, while some theater people, notably Tennessee Williams, scorned me for favoring ideas at the expense of emotions. At the time I felt a little misunderstood by friends and foes alike, and now that Tom Stoppard is being catapulted into the ranks of the immortals on the basis of his erudite theatrical works, I think I see why.

Obviously the one thing for which Stoppard cannot be faulted is a lack of intelligence. Indeed, some might think that his cerebral disputations were the answer to my prayers. Has he not managed to rekindle the lamps of enlightenment in a form benighted since the death of George Bernard Shaw? How many modern playwrights have read enough to discourse on Lenin, Joyce, Tristan Tzara, A. J. Ayer, Byron, Hobbes, Newton, Fermat, and the Hermit of Sidley Park, not to mention such abstruse subjects as quantum physics, higher mathematics, theoretical philosophy, and landscape gardening? But I was really talking about intelligence, an extension of the educated heart and therefore fundamental to great drama, not intellectualism, which can often be a flamboyant display of scholarship and erudition.

The Invention of Love, which has opened to great critical acclaim at the Lyceum Theatre under the sponsorship of Lincoln Center, may well be the showiest of all of Stoppard's intellectual exercises. Indeed, George Kelly should have loaned the author one of his play titles (*The Show-off*). Stoppard has never been known to wear his learning lightly: he always seems to be proving that he is the smartest kid in the class. But compared to *The Invention of Love*, even such a pyrotechnical work as *Travesties* (1974) looks under-researched. Every day this playwright has spent in the British Museum or the Bodleian Library investigating the life of A. E. Housman and his Oxford teachers and companions has been distilled into three hours of commentary. There is not enough plot here for twenty minutes of action, but there is enough erudition for a fortnight.

Yeats speaks of the will doing the work of the imagination. With Stoppard, that work is done by research. If the major challenge of writing about dons is to avoid donnishness, it is a challenge to which Stoppard has failed to rise. *The Invention of Love* has essentially one scene with the potential to hoist it out of the category of dramatized lecture: the moment when Housman is asked by Moses Jackson, the appealing if philistine Adonis whom he secretly adores, whether or not he is (as Jackson's girlfriend believes) "sweet" on him. Housman's reluctant confession ("Oh, if only you hadn't said anything! We could have carried on the same!") gets him expelled from his roommate's digs and exiled from his intimacy. But the scene is buried under so many literary references—the friendship of Theseus and Pirithous, whether English or Latin is better for poetry, and so on—that even a surefire moment of unrequited love somehow manages to lose its poignance.

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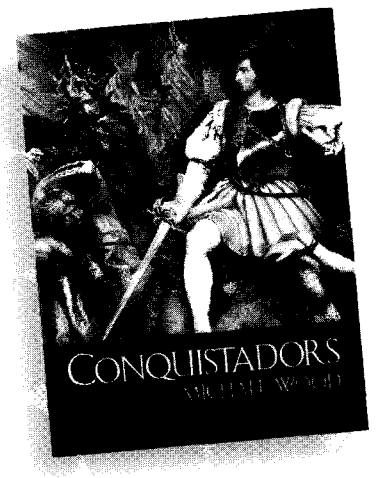

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Indeed, it is remarkable that a play about the passions of the heart can be so lacking in genuine feeling. Stoppard has nicely worked out a schema in which Housman, a classicist, examines how the idea of love was invented in the bisexual poems of certain classical Latin poets, while at the same time suffering emotional starvation himself—as a student at Balliol, as a clerk in His Majesty's patent office, and finally as an Oxford don.

The problem is that so much of the play is devoted to showing off Housman's (or Stoppard's) genius for textual criticism that there is virtually no room left for human dynamics. Entire pages of the text are taken up with discourses on Latin literature and language, including the importance of comma placement in Catullus, and how many "nec"s precede the "sed" in a Horace ode, and whether a later commentator interpolated an "et" for an "aut" in a poem by Propertius. It is interesting, for a while, to watch the parade of Stoppard's academic notables—John Ruskin trying to wed classical sophistication to nineteenth-century morality; Walter Pater arguing for a more liberated form of aestheticism; Benjamin Jowett fulminating against "beastliness" and "boy love" in Greek literature; Oscar Wilde, both in his Gilbert and Sullivan incarnation (Bunthorne in *Patience*) and in his own purple-velvet persona, boasting about how he has made his life into art. But like every celebrity party, this one eventually gets tedious, without a single drink to distract you from an admittedly witty and learned conversationalist who will not stop biting your ear.

What Stoppard really wants to establish, aside from his own cleverness, is how gay men suffered under a repressive sexual regime. *The Invention of Love* is very much a male play, featuring only one female character (Housman's sister), and it is very much concerned with male love (even the cover of the program features a painting of a nude young man). Much of the text is a discourse on Victorian views of what was coming to be known as "homosexuality" (a verbal barbarity to Housman, the word being "half Greek and half Latin"), with Housman and Wilde functioning as two of the narrow age's chief victims. But the play tells us a good deal less about Wilde than we can glean from his own writings (or from Moises Kaufman's play *Gross Indecency*, which chronicled Wilde's trials and his conviction on charges of sodomy and pederasty); and it is so buttoned-down regarding Housman that we rarely feel engaged sympathetically with his lonely life. Although Stoppard throws us a few quotes from *A Shropshire Lad*, he is so much more preoccupied with Housman the exacting classical pedant than with Housman the lyric poet that it is hard to know where the rueful plainness underlying an elegy such as "The Land of Lost Content" could have come from.

Jack O'Brien's task in directing this dramatized doctoral dissertation—indeed, the task of the entire cast—is to make such talk active. They are more successful than not. Bob Crowley helps out a lot with another of his stewardly settings in which, say, the Houses of Parliament can be instantly transformed into an eating table at an English club, and his costumes lend a nice outré touch to the natural elegance of the period. As for the acting, it is generally very energized, with the strongest impressions made by Robert Sean Leonard, who endows the younger Housman with a shy tenderness that the writing sometimes lacks; and Michael Stuhlbarg as Housman's goofy roommate Alfred Pollard; Mark Nelson as his gay officemate; and Jeff Weiss as the ferryman Charon in the guise of antic tour guide. In the older roles, Richard Easton as the seventy-seven-year-old Housman repeats his splenetic explosions too often for my taste, just as Byron Jennings barks exactly the same way playing both the academic Benjamin Jowett and the journalist Henry Labouchere. Still, these are all gifted actors in an evenly matched cast.

In his usual fashion, Stoppard has juxtaposed two different historical periods in *The Invention of Love*—the young Housman's university days and the voyage of his defunct older self across the river Styx. The third and perhaps the most important time period in the play is the age of the imperial Roman poets. Watching the play, I learned a lot about all of these writers, and I should be grateful to the author for that knowledge. But I do not normally go to the theater for continuing-education courses, however wittily taught. *The Invention of Love* comes off like a post-production symposium rather than an evening of drama, with Stoppard taking the parts of all the principal speakers.

The Theatre de Complicite's production of **Mnemonic** (at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice) is much closer than the Stoppard play to the kind of thing I was asking for. It is very intelligent, even intellectual; but it is also imaginative, mystical, haunting, and poetic. To my shame, this is the first piece that I have ever seen by this celebrated company of actors. It reveals them to be the most cosmopolitan and the least insular of any English troupe now performing.

Mnemonic also begins as a lecture—a lecture on memory by the company's leader, director, and co-writer, Simon McBurney. McBurney, who trained with the noted French acting teacher Jacques Lecoq, is a manically energetic performer with considerable stand-up capacities. Addressing the audience in a crumpled blue suit, he gives a talk on brain cells, synapses, and neuron connections that begins to develop the comic intensity of an intellectual *Goon Show*.

Each of the seats is equipped with a sleeping mask, which the spectators are asked to wear, and a fig leaf, which they are asked to feel (the idea is to imagine yourself back in the time of our common ancestors). McBurney drones on, giving instructions, and when we remove our masks we discover that his voice has morphed into a recording and that McBurney has become a character in the play (Virgil) who talks to his girlfriend (Alice) about a guy (McBurney) who came out on a stage and started to talk about memory. This is the first of a number of Pirandellian tricks that occur during the evening, for this is a piece about transformation as well as memory. Even more, it is about the common links in the extended human chain.

There are two strands of action in *Mnemonic*. One concerns the discovery, in the Italian Alps, of a frozen corpse, more than five thousand years old and perfectly preserved, called the Iceman. The other is about Alice, exquisitely performed by Kattrin Cartlidge, who, following her mother's death, embarks on a journey to find her long-lost father. Through a series of scientific and archaeological investigations, we learn more and more about the Iceman—that he suffered from arthritis and rheumatism, that he lay on his left side because his ribs were broken, that he was engaged in flight from "a danger, a disaster which had provoked him to risk his own life."

Through similar investigation, Alice, traveling in Central Europe, also learns a lot about her father: that the scarf of his that she has in her possession is a *tallis*, that he was Jewish and played the piano, that he was in flight from a similar kind of danger and disaster. Just as, following the discovery of the Iceman, archaeologists encountered a Neolithic settlement containing a mass grave of murdered bodies lying on their bellies, so thousands of years later the Allied forces were to stumble on the hells of Belsen and Buchenwald, and the evidence of the atrocities committed there. Eventually Alice ends up in Italy, in the very village where the Iceman is on display, after having found her father sleeping in a field (and deciding, oddly, not to waken him). The Iceman had been carrying a tassel, much like the tallis of her father.

At the end, each of the actors lies down one by one in the Iceman's place, rolling off the table to allow the next person to

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take his or her spot, "just as generation succeeds generation in a never-ending cycle." I am not sure why the memory theme is made so central to a play that seems to be more about the inter-relationships of humans through the ages in the face of persecution, murder, and subsequent migration. Perhaps it is because the actors' memories have contributed much to the development of the play. (McBurney's father was an archaeologist, Cattridge is half-Jewish, and so on.) But the performance inspires so much confidence that you know your questions have an answer.

The performance also impresses with its sheer theatrical wizardry—the way that the entire company contributes its experiences and its insights to create a unified artwork in the style of Robert LePage's Ex Machina troupe; the way that video is used, reminiscent of the techniques of an experimental company named Squat, as projections on the bodies of live actors; the way that, recalling the puppetry of Julie Taymor, a broken chair becomes the broken body of the Iceman. *Mnemonic* combines intelligence and scholarship with ambiguity and mystery to become a genuine work of theater poetry. Instead of separating audiences into an educational class system, like *The Invention of Love*, it shows how we can use our minds to explore experiences common to us all. ■

The premature obituary of the book.

Why Literature?

By MARIO VARGAS LLOSA

IT HAS OFTEN happened to me, at book fairs or in bookstores, that a gentleman approaches me and asks me for a signature. "It is for my wife, my young daughter, or my mother," he explains. "She is a great reader and loves literature." Immediately I ask: "And what about you? Don't you like to read?" The answer is almost always the same: "Of course I like to read, but I am a very busy person." I have heard this explanation dozens of times: this man and many thousands of men like him have so many important things to do, so many obligations, so many responsibilities in life, that they cannot waste their precious time buried in a novel, a book of poetry, or a literary essay for hours and hours. According to this widespread conception, literature is a dispensable activity, no doubt lofty and useful for cultivating sensitivity and good manners, but essentially an entertainment, an adornment that only people with time for recreation can afford. It is something to fit in between sports, the movies, a game of bridge or chess; and it can be sacrificed without scruple when one "prioritizes" the tasks and the duties that are indispensable in the struggle of life.

It seems clear that literature has become more and more a female activity. In bookstores, at conferences or public readings by writers, and even in university departments dedicated to the humanities, the women clearly outnumber the men. The explanation traditionally given is that middle-class women read more because they work fewer hours than men, and so many of them feel that they can justify more easily than men the time that they devote to fantasy and illusion. I am somewhat allergic to explanations that divide men and women into frozen categories and attribute to each sex its characteristic virtues and shortcomings; but there is no doubt that there are fewer and fewer readers of literature, and that among the saving remnant of readers women predominate.

This is the case almost everywhere. In Spain, for example, a recent survey organized by the General Society of Spanish Writers revealed that half of that country's population has never read a book. The survey also revealed that in the minority that does read, the number of women who admitted to reading surpasses the number of men by 6.2 percent, a difference that appears to be increasing. I am happy for these women, but I feel sorry for these men, and for the millions of human beings who could read but have decided not to read.

They earn my pity not only because they are unaware of the pleasure that they are missing, but also because I am convinced that a society without literature, or a society in which literature has been relegated—like some hidden vice—to the margins of social and personal life, and transformed into something like a sectar-

MARIO VARGAS LLOSA's new book, *The Feast of the Goat*, will be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in November. He is professor of Ibero-American Literature and Culture at Georgetown University.

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ian cult, is a society condemned to become spiritually barbaric, and even to jeopardize its freedom. I wish to offer a few arguments against the idea of literature as a luxury pastime, and in favor of viewing it as one of the most primary and necessary undertakings of the mind, an irreplaceable activity for the formation of citizens in a modern and democratic society, a society of free individuals.

WE LIVE IN the era of the specialization of knowledge, thanks to the prodigious development of science and technology and to the consequent fragmentation of knowledge into innumerable parcels and compartments. This cultural trend is, if anything, likely to be accentuated in years to come. To be sure, specialization brings many benefits. It allows for deeper exploration and greater experimentation; it is the very engine of progress. Yet it also has negative consequences, for it eliminates those common intellectual and cultural traits that permit men and women to co-exist, to communicate, to feel a sense of solidarity. Specialization leads to a lack of social understanding, to the division of human beings into ghettos of technicians and specialists. The specialization of knowledge requires specialized languages and increasingly arcane codes, as information becomes more and more specific and compartmentalized. This is the particularism and the division against which an old proverb warned us: do not focus too much on the branch or the leaf, lest you forget that they are part of a tree, or too much on the tree, lest you forget that it is part of a forest. Awareness of the existence of the forest creates the feeling of generality, the feeling of belonging, that binds society together and prevents it from disintegrating into a myriad of solipsistic particularities. The solipsism of nations and individuals produces paranoia and delirium, distortions of reality that generate hatred, wars, and even genocide.

In our time, science and technology cannot play an integrating role, precisely because of the infinite richness of knowledge and the speed of its evolution, which have led to specialization and its obscurities. But literature has been, and will continue to be, as long as it exists, one of the common denominators of human experience through which human beings may recognize themselves and converse with each other, no matter how different their professions, their life plans, their geographical and cultural locations, their personal circumstances. It has enabled individuals, in all the particularities of their lives, to transcend history: as readers of Cervantes, Shakespeare, Dante, and Tolstoy, we understand each other across space and time, and we feel ourselves to be members of the same species because, in the works that these writers created, we learn what we share as human beings, what remains common in all of us under the broad range of differences that separate us. Nothing better protects a human being against the stupidity of prejudice, racism, religious or political sectarianism, and exclusivist nationalism than this truth that invariably appears in great literature: that men and women of all nations and places are essentially equal, and that only injustice sows among them discrimination, fear, and exploitation.

Nothing teaches us better than literature to see, in ethnic and cultural differences, the richness of the human patrimony, and to prize those differences as a manifestation of humanity's multi-faceted creativity. Reading good literature is an experience of pleasure, of course; but it is also an experience of learning what and how we are, in our human integrity and our human imperfection, with our actions, our dreams, and our ghosts, alone and in relationships that link us to others, in our public image and in the secret recesses of our consciousness.

THIS COMPLEX SUM of contradictory truths—as Isaiah Berlin called them—constitutes the very substance of the human condition. In today's world, this totalizing and living knowledge of a human being may be found only in literature. Not even the other branches of the humanities—not philosophy, history, or the arts, and certainly not the social sciences—have been able to preserve this integrating vision, this universalizing discourse. The humanities, too, have succumbed to the cancerous division and subdivision of knowledge, isolating themselves in increasingly segmented and technical sectors whose ideas and vocabularies lie beyond the reach of the common woman and man. Some critics and theorists would even like to change literature into a science. But this will never happen, because fiction does not exist to investigate only a single precinct of experience. It exists to enrich through the imagination the entirety of human life, which cannot be dismembered, disarticulated, or reduced to a series of schemas or formulas without disappearing. This is the meaning of Proust's observation that "real life, at last enlightened and revealed, the only life fully lived, is literature." He was not exaggerating, nor was he expressing only his love for his own vocation. He was advancing the particular proposition that as a result of literature life is better understood and better lived; and that living life more fully necessitates living it and sharing it with others.

The brotherly link that literature establishes among human beings, compelling them to enter into dialogue and making them conscious of a common origin and a common goal, transcends all temporal barriers. Literature transports us into the past and links us to those who in bygone eras plotted, enjoyed, and dreamed through those texts that have come down to us, texts that now allow us also to enjoy and to dream. This feeling of membership in the collective human experience across time and space is the highest achievement of culture, and nothing contributes more to its renewal in every generation than literature.

IT ALWAYS IRRITATED Borges when he was asked, "What is the use of literature?" It seemed to him a stupid question, to which he would reply: "No one would ask what is the use of a canary's song or a beautiful sunset." If such beautiful things exist, and if, thanks to them, life is even for an instant less ugly and less sad, is it not petty to seek practical justifications? But the question is a good one. For novels and poems are not like the sound of birdsong or the spectacle of the sun sinking into the horizon, because they were not created by chance or by nature. They are human creations, and it is therefore legitimate to ask how and why they came into the world, and what is their purpose, and why they have lasted so long.

Literary works are born, as shapeless ghosts, in the intimacy of a writer's consciousness, projected into it by the combined strength of the unconscious, and the writer's sensitivity to the world around him, and the writer's emotions; and it is these things to which the poet or the narrator, in a struggle with words, gradually gives form, body, movement, rhythm, harmony, and life. An artificial life, to be sure, a life imagined, a life made of language—yet men and women seek out this artificial life, some frequently, others sporadically, because real life falls short for them, and is incapable of offering them what they want. Literature does not begin to exist through the work of a single individual. It exists only when it is adopted by others and becomes a part of social life—when it becomes, thanks to reading, a shared experience.

One of its first beneficial effects takes place at the level of language. A community without a written literature expresses itself with less precision, with less richness of nuance, and with less clarity than a community whose principal instrument of communication, the word, has been cultivated and perfected by means of literary texts. A humanity without reading. untouched by literature, would resemble a community of deaf-mutes and aphasics,

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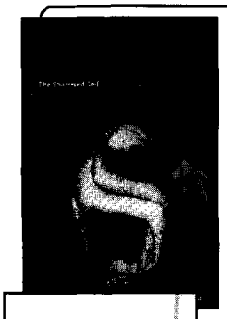
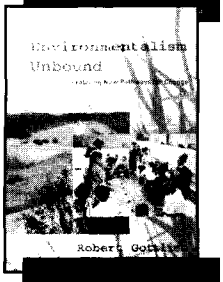
afflicted by tremendous problems of communication due to its crude and rudimentary language. This is true for individuals, too. A person who does not read, or reads little, or reads only trash, is a person with an impediment: he can speak much but he will say little, because his vocabulary is deficient in the means for self-expression.

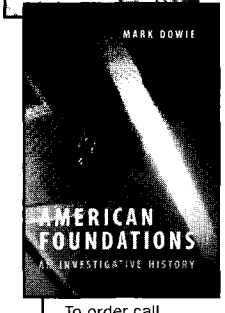
This is not only a verbal limitation. It represents also a limitation in intellect and in imagination. It is a poverty of thought, for the simple reason that ideas, the concepts through which we grasp the secrets of our condition, do not exist apart from words. We learn how to speak correctly—and deeply, rigorously, and subtly—from good literature, and only from good literature. No other discipline or branch of the arts can substitute for literature in crafting the language that people need to communicate. To speak well, to have at one's disposal a rich and diverse language, to be able to find the appropriate expression for every idea and every emotion that we want to communicate, is to be better prepared to think, to teach, to learn, to converse, and also to fantasize, to dream, to feel. In a surreptitious way, words reverberate in all our actions, even in those actions that seem far removed from language. And as language evolved, thanks to literature, and reached high levels of refinement and manners, it increased the possibility of human enjoyment.

Literature has even served to confer upon love and desire and the sexual act itself the status of artistic creation. Without literature, eroticism would not exist. Love and pleasure would be poorer, they would lack delicacy and exquisiteness, they would fail to attain to the intensity that literary fantasy offers. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that a couple who have read Garcilaso, Petrarch, Góngora, or Baudelaire value pleasure and experience pleasure more than illiterate people who have been made into idiots by television's soap operas. In an illiterate world, love and desire would be no different from what satisfies animals, nor would they transcend the crude fulfillment of elementary instincts.

Nor are the audiovisual media equipped to replace literature in this task of teaching human beings to use with assurance and with skill the extraordinarily rich possibilities that language encompasses. On the contrary, the audiovisual media tend to relegate words to a secondary level with respect to images, which are the primordial language of these media, and to constrain language to its oral expression, to its indispensable minimum, far from its written dimension. To define a film or a television program as "literary" is an elegant way of saying that it is boring. For this reason, literary programs on the radio or on television rarely capture the public. So far as I know, the only exception to this rule was Bernard Pivot's program, *Apostrophes*, in France. And this leads me to think that not only is literature indispensable for a full knowledge and a full mastery of language, but its fate is linked also and indissolubly with the fate of the book, that industrial product that many are now declaring obsolete.

THIS BRINGS ME to Bill Gates. He was in Madrid not long ago and visited the Royal Spanish Academy, which has embarked upon a joint venture with Microsoft. Among other things, Gates assured the members of the Academy that he would personally guarantee that the letter "ñ" would never be removed from computer software—a promise that allowed four hundred million Spanish speakers on five continents to breathe a sigh of relief, since the banishment of such an essential letter from cyberspace would have created monumental problems. Immediately after making his amiable concession to the Spanish language, however, Gates, before even leaving the premises of the Academy, avowed in a press conference that he expected to accomplish his highest goal before he died. That goal, he explained, is to



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put an end to paper and then to books.

In his judgment, books are anachronistic objects. Gates argued that computer screens are able to replace paper in all the functions that paper has heretofore assumed. He also insisted that, in addition to being less onerous, computers take up less space, and are more easily transportable; and also that the transmission of news and literature by these electronic media, instead of by newspapers and books, will have the ecological advantage of stopping the destruction of forests, a cataclysm that is a consequence of the paper industry. People will continue to read, Gates assured his listeners, but they will read on computer screens, and consequently there will be more chlorophyll in the environment.

I was not present at Gates's little discourse; I learned these details from the press. Had I been there I would have booed Gates for proclaiming shamelessly his intention to send me and my colleagues, the writers of books, directly to the unemployment line. And I would have vigorously disputed his analysis. Can the screen really replace the book in all its aspects? I am not so certain. I am fully aware of the enormous revolution that new technologies such as the Internet have caused in the fields of communication and the sharing of information, and I confess that the Internet provides invaluable help to me every day in my work; but my gratitude for these extraordinary conveniences does not imply a belief that the electronic screen can replace paper, or that reading on a computer can stand in for literary reading. That is a chasm that I cannot cross. I cannot accept the idea that a non-functional or non-pragmatic act of reading, one that seeks neither information nor a useful and immediate communication, can integrate on a computer screen the dreams and the pleasures of words with the same sensation of intimacy, the same mental concentration and spiritual isolation, that may be achieved by the act of reading a book.

Perhaps this a prejudice resulting from lack of practice, and from a long association of literature with books and paper. But even though I enjoy surfing the Web in search of world news, I would never go to the screen to read a poem by Góngora or a novel by Onetti or an essay by Paz, because I am certain that the effect of such a reading would not be the same. I am convinced, although I cannot prove it, that with the disappearance of the book, literature would suffer a serious blow, even a mortal one. The term "literature" would not disappear, of course. Yet it would almost certainly be used to denote a type of text as distant from what we understand as literature today as soap operas are from the tragedies of Sophocles and Shakespeare.

THERE IS STILL another reason to grant literature an important place in the life of nations. Without it, the critical mind, which is the real engine of historical change and the best protector of liberty, would suffer an irreparable loss. This is because all good literature is radical, and poses radical questions about the world in which we live. In all great literary texts, often without their authors' intending it, a seditious inclination is present.

Literature says nothing to those human beings who are satisfied with their lot, who are content with life as they now live it. Literature is the food of the rebellious spirit, the promulgator of non-conformities, the refuge for those who have too much or too little in life. One seeks sanctuary in literature so as not to be unhappy and so as not to be incomplete. To ride alongside the scrawny Rocinante and the confused Knight on the fields of La Mancha, to sail the seas on the back of a whale with Captain Ahab, to drink arsenic with Emma Bovary, to become an insect with Gregor Samsa: these are all ways that we have invented to divest ourselves of the wrongs and the impositions of this unjust life, a life that forces us always to be the same person when we wish to be many different people, so as to satisfy the many desires that possess us.

Literature pacifies this vital dissatisfaction only momentarily—but in this miraculous instant, in this provisional suspension of life, literary illusion lifts and transports us outside of history, and we become citizens of a timeless land, and in this way immortal. We become more intense, richer, more complicated, happier, and more lucid than we are in the constrained routine of ordinary life. When we close the book and abandon literary fiction, we return to actual existence and compare it to the splendid land that we have just left. What a disappointment awaits us! Yet a tremendous realization also awaits us, namely, that the fantasized life of the novel is better—more beautiful and more diverse, more comprehensible and more perfect—than the life that we live while awake, a life conditioned by the limits and the tedium of our condition. In this way, good literature, genuine literature, is always subversive, unsubmissive, rebellious: a challenge to what exists.

How could we not feel cheated after reading *War and Peace* or *Remembrance of Things Past* and returning to our world of insignificant details, of boundaries and prohibitions that lie in wait everywhere and, with each step, corrupt our illusions? Even more than the need to sustain the continuity of culture and to enrich language, the greatest contribution of literature to human progress is perhaps to remind us (without intending to, in the majority of cases) that the world is badly made; and that those who pretend to the contrary, the powerful and the lucky, are lying; and that the world can be improved, and made more like the worlds that our imagination and our language are able to create. A free and democratic society must have responsible and critical citizens conscious of the need continuously to examine the world that we inhabit and to try, even though it is more and more an impossible task, to make it more closely resemble the world that we would like to inhabit. And there is no better means of fomenting dissatisfaction with existence than the reading of good literature; no better means of forming critical and independent citizens who will not be manipulated by those who govern them, and who are endowed with a permanent spiritual mobility and a vibrant imagination.

Still, to call literature seditious because it sensitizes a reader's consciousness to the imperfections of the world does not mean—as churches and governments seem to think it means when they establish censorship—that literary texts will provoke immediate social upheavals or accelerate revolutions. The social and political effects of a poem, a play, or a novel cannot be foreseen, because they are not collectively made or collectively experienced. They are created by individuals and they are read by individuals, who vary enormously in the conclusions that they draw from their writing and their reading. For this reason, it is difficult, or even impossible, to establish precise patterns. Moreover, the social consequences of a work of literature may have little to do with its aesthetic quality. A mediocre novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe seems to have played a decisive role in raising social and political consciousness of the horrors of slavery in the United States. The fact that these effects of literature are difficult to identify does not imply that they do not exist. The important point is that they are effects brought about by the actions of citizens whose personalities have been formed in part by books.

Good literature, while temporarily relieving human dissatisfaction, actually increases it, by developing a critical and non-conformist attitude toward life. It might even be said that literature makes human beings more likely to be unhappy. To live dissatisfied, and at war with existence, is to seek things that may not be there, to condemn oneself to fight futile battles, like the battles that Colonel Aureliano Buendía fought in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, knowing full well that

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he would lose them all. All this may be true. Yet it is also true that without rebellion against the mediocrity and the squalor of life, we would still live in a primitive state, and history would have stopped. The autonomous individual would not have been created, science and technology would not have progressed, human rights would not have been recognized, freedom would not have existed. All these things are born of unhappiness, of acts of defiance against a life perceived as insufficient or intolerable. For this spirit that scorns life as it is—and searches with the madness of Don Quixote, whose insanity derived from the reading of chivalric novels—literature has served as a great spur.

Let us attempt a fantastic historical reconstruction. Let us imagine a world without literature, a humanity that has not read poems or novels. In this kind of atrophied civilization, with its puny lexicon in which groans and ape-like gesticulations would prevail over words, certain adjectives would not exist. Those adjectives include: quixotic, Kafkaesque, Rabelaisian, Orwellian, sadistic, and masochistic, all terms of literary origin. To be sure, we would still have insane people, and victims of paranoia and persecution complexes, and people with uncommon appetites and outrageous excesses, and bipeds who enjoy inflicting or receiving pain. But we would not have learned to see, behind these extremes of behavior that are prohibited by the norms of our culture, essential characteristics of the human condition. We would not have discovered our own traits, as only the talents of Cervantes, Kafka, Rabelais, Orwell, de Sade, and Sacher-Masoch have revealed them to us.

When the novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha* appeared, its first readers made fun of this extravagant dreamer, as well as the rest of the characters in the novel. Today we know that the insistence of the *caballero de la triste figura* on seeing giants where there were windmills, and on acting in his seemingly absurd way, is really the highest form of generosity, and a means of protest against the misery of this world in the hope of changing it. Our very notions of the ideal, and of idealism, so redolent with a positive moral connotation, would not be what they are, would not be clear and respected values, had they not been incarnated in the protagonist of a novel through the persuasive force of Cervantes's genius. The same can be said of that small and pragmatic female Quixote, Emma Bovary, who fought with ardor to live the splendid life of passion and luxury that she came to know through novels. Like a butterfly, she came too close to the flame and was burned in the fire.

The inventions of all great literary creators open our eyes to unknown aspects of our own condition. They enable us to explore and to understand more fully the common human abyss. When we say "Borgesian," the word immediately conjures up the separation of our minds from the rational order of reality and the entry into a fantastic universe, a rigorous and elegant mental construction, almost always labyrinthine and arcane, and riddled with literary references and allusions, whose singularities are not foreign to us because in them we recognize hidden desires and intimate truths of our own personality that took shape only thanks to the literary creation of Jorge Luis Borges. The word "Kafkaesque" comes to mind, like the focus mechanism of those old cameras with their accordion arms, every time we feel threatened, as defenseless individuals, by the oppressive machines of power that have caused so much pain and injustice in the modern world—the authoritarian regimes, the vertical parties, the intolerant churches, the asphyxiating bureaucrats. Without the short stories and the novels of that tormented Jew from Prague who wrote in German and lived always on the lookout, we would not have been able to understand the impotent feeling of the isolated individual, or the terror of persecuted and discriminated minorities, confronted with the all-embracing powers that can smash them and eliminate them without the henchmen even showing their faces.

The adjective "Orwellian," first cousin of "Kafkaesque," gives a voice to the terrible anguish, the sensation of extreme absurdity, that was generated by totalitarian dictatorships of the twentieth century, the most sophisticated, cruel, and absolute dictatorships in history, in their control of the actions and the psyches of the members of a society. In *1984*, George Orwell described in cold and haunting shades a humanity subjugated to Big Brother, an absolute lord who, through an efficient combination of terror and technology, eliminated liberty, spontaneity, and equality, and transformed society into a beehive of automatons. In this nightmarish world, language also obeys power, and has been transformed into "newspeak," purified of all invention and all subjectivity, metamorphosed into a string of platitudes that ensure the individual's slavery to the system. It is true that the sinister prophecy of *1984* did not come to pass, and totalitarian communism in the Soviet Union went the way of totalitarian fascism in Germany and elsewhere; and soon thereafter it began to deteriorate also in China, and in anachronistic Cuba and North Korea. But the danger is never completely dispelled, and the word "Orwellian" continues to describe the danger, and to help us to understand it.

So literature's unrealities, literature's lies, are also a precious vehicle for the knowledge of the most hidden of human realities. The truths that it reveals are not always flattering; and sometimes the image of ourselves that emerges in the mirror of novels and poems is the image of a monster. This happens when we read about the horrendous sexual butchery fantasized by de Sade, or the dark lacerations and brutal sacrifices that fill the cursed books of Sacher-Masoch and Bataille. At times the spectacle is so offensive and ferocious that it becomes irresistible. Yet the worst in these pages is not the blood, the humiliation, the abject love of torture; the worst is the discovery that this violence and this excess are not foreign to us, that they are a profound part of humanity. These monsters eager for transgression are hidden in the most intimate recesses of our being; and from the shadow where they live they seek a propitious occasion to manifest themselves, to impose the rule of unbridled desire that destroys rationality, community, and even existence. And it was not science that first ventured into these tenebrous places in the human mind, and discovered the destructive and the self-destructive potential that also shapes it. It was literature that made this discovery. A world without literature would be partly blind to these terrible depths, which we urgently need to see.

Uncivilized, barbarian, devoid of sensitivity and crude of speech, ignorant and instinctual, inept at passion and crude at love, this world without literature, this nightmare that I am delineating, would have as its principal traits conformism and the universal submission of humankind to power. In this sense, it would also be a purely animalistic world. Basic instincts would determine the daily practices of a life characterized by the struggle for survival, and the fear of the unknown, and the satisfaction of physical necessities. There would be no place for the spirit. In this world, moreover, the crushing monotony of living would be accompanied by the sinister shadow of pessimism, the feeling that human life is what it had to be and that it will always be thus, and that no one and nothing can change it.

When one imagines such a world, one is tempted to picture primitives in loincloths, the small magic-religious communities that live at the margins of modernity in Latin America, Oceania, and Africa. But

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I have a different failure in mind. The nightmare that I am warning about is the result not of under-development but of over-development. As a consequence of technology and our subservience to it, we may imagine a future society full of computer screens and speakers, and without books, or a society in which books—that is, works of literature—have become what alchemy became in the era of physics: an archaic curiosity, practiced in the catacombs of the media civilization by a neurotic minority. I am afraid that this cybernetic world, in spite of its prosperity and its power, its high standard of living and its scientific achievement would be profoundly uncivilized and utterly soulless—a resigned humanity of post-literary automatons who have abdicated freedom.

It is highly improbable, of course, that this macabre utopia will ever come about. The end of our story, the end of history, has not yet been written, and it is not pre-determined. What we will become depends entirely on our vision and our will. But if we wish to avoid the impoverishment of our imagination, and the disappearance of the precious dissatisfaction that refines our sensibility and teaches us to speak with eloquence and rigor, and the weakening of our freedom, then we must act. More precisely, we must read. ■

The End of History

By TONY JUDT

Troublemaker: The Life and History of A. J. P. Taylor by Kathleen Burk

(Yale University Press, 491 pp., $35)

FOR A NUMBER of years, I taught a graduate seminar in modern European history. This was usually taken by students preparing for their doctoral exams and seeking a general refresher course. I would ask them at the outset why they were there and what they thought they needed to study. The ensuing conversation was always the same. Students would begin by conceding that they felt a bit "thin" on the detail of the French Revolution, or were "under-prepared" in the background to the First World War, or could use some "revision" covering the inter-war narrative, and so on.

After some probing, and on the promise of professional secrecy, students would start to confess that they were actually in a state of panic. To be sure, they could expatiate at length on theories of nationalism. They had mastered the disputes surrounding the nature of fascism or the gendered impact of industrialization. They knew how to "explain" history and could reproduce parrot-like the main debates in the "literature of the field." But they had not the foggiest notion what happened, when it happened, who did it, or why. They knew nothing, and they knew it.

My response, so far as it concerned the general history of nineteenth-century Europe, was that they should set aside the debates and the theories that they had so painfully memorized, and the prejudices that had been carefully inculcated in them against diplomatic history, political history, the history of upper-class men, and any history book written more than twenty years before. Instead they should read just one long book end to end, and then come back to report.

The initial reaction was predictable: a sidelong glance of disappointment and reproof. So it's true: you *are* an unreconstructed reactionary chauvinist! But academic correctness is no match for exam nerves, and the book was duly read. And the effect was unfailingly dramatic. At our next meeting the testimonials glowed. "It all makes sense now." "At last I understand how it all links up." "Now I know what happened." Whereas I was blind, now do I see!

The book that I assigned was A.J.P. Taylor's *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918*, which was published in 1954 as a volume (the first one to appear) in the Oxford History of Modern Europe. Today's students have not heard of Taylor, nor have many of their teachers. And if they recognize the name at all, they know the author as someone vaguely disreputable—old-fashioned, old-Left, a bit popular. They are not completely wrong. Taylor was full of prejudices, he enjoyed provocation for its own sake, and he could be more than a little wrongheaded. But two of his books are unmatched masterpieces of historical writing in English, and his contemporary under-valuation casts an unflattering light on much that is amiss in the American historical profession today.

ALAN JOHN PERCIVALE TAYLOR was born in 1906 into a middle-class, non-conformist family in the Lancashire heartland of England's industrial North. In certain respects he pursued a classic "outsider" trajectory: a lonely child, devoted to books, he won a place to study history at Oxford, where he worked hard and did well. He went off to Vienna to undertake research, completed his doctorate, and in 1930 secured a junior post at the University of Manchester, then as now a leading "redbrick" provincial university. Eight years later he returned to Oxford as a fellow in modern history at Magdalen College, a position that he held for twenty-five years. Thereafter he devoted himself to professional writing and broadcasting, living in London and publishing a steady stream of books and essays. He gave up history writing rather early, shortly after turning seventy. Even so, by the time he died in September 1990 he had published twenty-three books and had been the object of not one but three *Festschriften*.

Kathleen Burk has written a full and balanced account of the man and the historian. Hers is not the first telling of Taylor's life. He wrote a memoir of his own, and he was the subject of a more personal biographical study by Adam Sisman that appeared in 1994. But Burk pays special attention to Taylor's output (and also to his income: the latter, mostly deriving from books and journalism, was strikingly large by British academic standards, admittedly not a very demanding benchmark). The result is a brisk and professional story of a man who was himself brisk and professional, and remarkably prolific. There is no substitute for reading Taylor, but Burk offers convincing reasons to do so; for American readers less familiar with the nuances of English social and academic life in the middle years of the last century, she is a helpful and lucid guide.

Taylor went to Austria in 1928 as a graduate student to work with Professor Alfred Pribram, on the mistaken assumption that the latter was still pursuing his interest in English foreign policy in the Cromwellian era. But Pribram, like so many Central European historians of his generation, was now obsessed with the

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causes of the Great War. Taylor was duly convinced to interest himself in nineteenth-century diplomatic history, and out of this, and his growing affection for Vienna, emerged the first generation of his writings, which were devoted to the political history of Central Europe.

His books from this period include *The Italian Problem in European Diplomacy, 1847-1849* and *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918*. *The Italian Problem*, published in 1934, was Taylor's first book, a closely documented account of a significant moment in mid-nineteenth century international relations. *The Habsburg Monarchy*, published in 1941 and still in print, is quintessential Taylor, fast-paced and slightly quirky. To contemporary taste it is rather Austro-centric, with the complicated ethnic and linguistic aspects of Austria-Hungary (or the Austro-Hungarian empire) treated as irritating diversions from the main story of irreversible imperial decline. It was not by chance that Taylor chose to emphasize the monarchy in his title. But just for this reason the book remains an accessible introduction to its important subject.

From Habsburgia, Taylor graduated to an interest in Germany. His first bestseller, *The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of Germany Since 1815*, appeared in 1945. The date of publication is significant. Written in the shadow of the war, Taylor's account of the rise and fall of German power is unashamedly anti-German in tone. Like Geoffrey Barraclough, whose *The Origins of Modern Germany* was published in 1946, Taylor took it for granted that the point of a book about German history was to explain how it had culminated in Hitler.

The doomed story of German liberalism, and of the inevitably disruptive and ultimately destructive consequences of Germany's continental ambitions, shape not just this work but everything that Taylor wrote on the subject, including his biography of Bismarck that was published a decade later ("the best on him ever written" in Taylor's characteristically immodest assessment) and, above all, his controversial interpretation of Hitler's foreign policy in *The Origins of The Second World War* in 1961, of which more later. Yet his "German period" really came to an end with the appearance of *The Struggle for Mastery*, after which he increasingly reverted to English history, his first love.

Taylor always held that *The Troublemakers: Dissent over British Foreign Policy, 1792-1939*, which appeared in 1957, was his favorite book. Many of us would respectfully dissent; the book is too blatantly a projection backwards of his own idiosyncratic stance as a dissenting radical. But in 1965 he published *English History, 1914-1945*, another volume in an Oxford History, this time about England. Although it has been superseded in many respects, most dispassionate critics rank this work with *The Struggle for Mastery* as Taylor at his very best. It is written with the ease and the control that comes not only from a sure mastery of the subject, but also from the author's supreme confidence in his own point of view. It is certainly a product of its time—Taylor manages to convey both nostalgia for an England in decline and optimism about the prospects for a social-democratic future; but like all of Taylor's writings, the book displays a sovereign unconcern for contemporary historiographical fashion. Not least for this reason, it is already a classic.

A. J. P. Taylor by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

From very early on, Taylor showed a quite un-English enthusiasm for making money. In conjunction with his considerable self-confidence—and driven by domestic need (Taylor acquired three wives and six children in the course of a rather unstable personal life)—this led him first to radio broadcasting, and then to book-reviewing and a regular column in a Sunday newspaper, and finally to television. I first came across him as a television lecturer when I was still a child, and it is difficult now to convey the impression that he made upon me and millions of other viewers.

Today history and historians are frequently on the small screen. Reading their script by voice-over or from an unseen teleprompter, backed by shoals of researchers and script editors, modern television historians have to do little more than dress appropriately, learn their lines for the next take, follow directions, and do their best to be charming. Archive footage, computer visuals and the cutting-room will do the rest. On Simon Schama's recent *History Of Britain*, the BBC not only furnished him with a striking array of location shots in magnificent Scottish castles, it even threw in convincing reproductions of the very battles that took place there.

But Taylor, the first professional historian to use television as a medium, had nothing: no pictures, no sound, no notes. Just his bow tie, his hands, a microphone, an eerily perfect sense of timing, an uncanny memory, and everything that he knew. He would stand in a dark studio, in front of a stationary camera, and lecture for a half hour or an hour on British or European history. No commercial breaks, no maps, no visuals. Just a history lecture, iconoclastic and engrossing: in essence, a simplified version of the lectures that he delivered for a quarter of

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a century at Oxford. And a substantial subset of the national television audience of Great Britain sat and watched. That audience probably does not exist anymore. But even if it did, who could supply the product?

TELEVISION BROUGHT TAYLOR fame and prosperity, the more so because it helped to sell his books. But it did not make him happy. In part this was a matter of his personality. He preferred his own company: "books were for me real life; people were an interruption and hardly even that." Burk writes of his "amazing lack of sensitivity to the thoughts and emotions of others." Still, he resented his solitude. As he wrote to his third wife, the Hungarian historian Eva Haraszti: "It seems to me that as a scholar I was always solitary, a 'loner,' having to work everything out for myself." He was not embarrassed to describe himself as "a rather special historian," but he could be hurt when this led others to keep him at a distance.

Much of Taylor's prickly behavior can best be put down to his resentment at being, in his own eyes, something of a failure. This sounds more than a little absurd. How can a scholar hold himself a failure who has won an entrance award to Oxford, secured a First Class degree and held a tenured teaching position there, published at least two books of passing brilliance and twenty-one others which, together with his media work, have given him fame and fortune beyond the grave? Well, you don't have to be English in order to understand, but it helps.

Born well beyond the charmed circle of the English ruling classes, Taylor won an exhibition to Oriel College, Oxford, but not a scholarship to Balliol College, his first choice. He got a First in his final exams, but the chairman of examiners would later inform him that his marks were not quite as good as they might have been. His own college tutor once told him that he was "not cut out for the academic life." He held a tutorial fellowship at an Oxford college, but he was denied the Regius Chair that he (and many others) felt should have been his. Indeed, he was not named to a professorial chair anywhere in Britain. He never accumulated the honors—a knighthood, a Commander of the British Empire, a Companion of Honour—that come to most of the great old British historians if they outlive their radical youth, or if they never had one. And Taylor's distinctive achievement as the first media don was held against him. In the England of his day, being "too clever by half" was not the only unforgivable social solecism; you could also be "too successful," particularly in the popular media, which counted as "trade."

A. J. P. TAYLOR, in short, was not part of the English Establishment. This is a point in his favor—as Hugh Trevor-Roper, who got the Regius Chair at Oxford that Taylor so coveted, once wrote, "The sad fact is that Taylor is really too independent to have *any* support from *any* Establishment." Taylor was certainly what we would call a bad team player, crotchety and selfish. But he stood firmly in a certain tradition of English northern radicalism: anti-authoritarian, unaccommodating, awkward.

He was an early supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament at its founding in 1958, and he made a point, in all his public appearances, of being deliciously unpredictable. His comments on television and radio panels were anathema to Right and Left alike. He had little patience for "continentals," his deep knowledge of their history notwithstanding. (Characteristically, he disliked the idea of English involvement with Europe, in military adventures or in economic unions.) He once observed, about a controversy over something he wrote, that "it is almost impossible for a mere Englishman to talk sense about eastern Europe without being subjected to a Polish 'terror by correspondence.' "

This "Little England" radicalism, in the lineage of Paine, Cobbett, William Morris, G. D. H. Cole and (sometimes) Orwell, as well as much of the pre-Blair Labour Party, can seem provincial, and even conservative, when it is removed from its local context. But without that context, Taylor's distinctive obsessions are hard to grasp. It explains, for example, the lifelong anti-German streak in his writing, shaped in part by his generation's experience of two wars with Germany in the space of one adult lifetime. It accounts, too, for the curious sympathy that he evinced for the Soviet Union.

Taylor was no communist. As an English patriot, however, he was convinced that an alliance with the Soviet Union was the only hope for his country. And as a diplomatic historian he emphasized not just the longstanding Anglo-Russian interest in a stable continent, but also the continuity between Tsarist foreign policy and Stalinist foreign policy. He paid scant attention to domestic policies or to doctrinal motivation. Interests of state had been the driving force behind international history in the past, and Taylor saw no reason to believe that things had changed. As a result, though coming from a very different starting point, he had something in common with the great mandarin historians of the British Left, communist and non-communist alike. Like Cole (or, later, like Eric Hobsbawm), he had scant patience for the disruptive peoples of Eastern and Central Europe; and like E. H. Carr (whom he once called "the greatest modern historian living"), he was simply bored by accounts of Bolshevik crimes.

On the Soviet Union, though, Taylor was merely silly—pressing for an Anglo-Soviet alliance in preference to an Anglo-American one, for example, when the Cold War was already under way. (His ambivalence toward the United States was another instance of his slightly wounded English parochialism.) But his anti-German sentiments led him, paradoxically, to his only significant historical mistake. According to Kathleen Burk, Taylor wrote three books of enduring value: *The Struggle for Mastery*; *English History, 1914-1945*; and *The Origins of the Second World War*. Few will quarrel with her about the first two. And Taylor's study of Hitler and his war is certainly his best-known book. But its lasting value is open to question.

TAYLOR WAS NOTHING if not consistent (except when in search of a paradox), and his deliberately provocative interpretation of the events leading up to the outbreak of war in September 1939 fits his general historical approach. The argument of *The Origins of the Second World War* runs thus: foreign policy is not driven by ideological or domestic concerns, but by enduring external considerations of geography, great power politics, and the like. Accordingly, we should explain Hitler's foreign policy just as we would explain that of any other German statesman of the past. The Führer simply wanted, by whatever means were to hand, to set aside the Versailles Treaty and to restore German hegemony in Central Europe.

In pursuing these goals, according to Taylor, Hitler had no master plan, just general strategic designs in search of an opportunity. Lacking a timetable, he took advantage of the openings afforded him (mostly by the incompetence of the French and the British—hence the importance for Taylor of Munich); in doing so, he had the backing not just of the Nazis, but of the whole German people. And although Hitler undoubtedly is responsible for World War II, it was not the war he wanted. It is not even clear, according to Taylor, that Hitler wanted a war (as distinct from the benefits of conquest and expansion) at all.

The shock value of these propositions was greater in 1960 than it is today. In those days, historians and the public still

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lived under the shadow of the Nuremberg trials, where the Nazis had been found guilty, in the first instance, of conspiring to bring about and to pursue a criminal war. But it was only the Nazis, and not the German people, who stood thus accused. What Taylor did was to claim that Hitler never actually planned a war, as such; and then to remind his readers that whatever it is that Hitler did, it must be charged to the Germans as a whole. There was no Nazi "conspiracy" of which the mass of German citizens was unaware, and of which they would have disapproved had they been asked. It was Germany, and the Germans, who brought the apocalypse on themselves, not Hitler and his non-existent master plan.

BURK ASSERTS THAT Taylor's book "changed entirely the public's view and the historians' approach to the war." This claim is too strong. Taylor certainly prised open a subject that had been prematurely closed. And given contemporary constraints—most official records and private papers were still closed to researchers—he made a seductive case. But he was too determined to wave aside any indication that Hitler might really have been set on war; he was simply not interested in evidence to this effect from *Mein Kampf* or contemporary witnesses. Above all, it seems not to have occurred to Taylor that Hitler's racist obsessions colored everything that he undertook.

Moreover, although he was absolutely right to insist that in its general thrust Hitler's foreign policy was the least original of his undertakings, Taylor's style of argument—punchy, assertive, over-the-top, take-no-prisoners—worked against him. He seemed to be saying that World War II, in all its unparalleled horror, was not really Hitler's fault. I do not think that was his point (though some of his latter-day would-be heirs do assert as much); but his more moderate claims were obscured by it, perhaps to his perverse amusement.

If we think differently about these matters today, it is less thanks to Taylor's book and more because of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, the arrest and the trial of concentration camp functionaries in Germany, and the coming of a new generation of historians who ask very different sorts of questions. It is true that Taylor's emphasis upon the need to look at the Germans as a whole, and not just at the Nazi leadership, has been thoroughly incorporated into the literature. But for this Taylor cannot really take the credit—though his hunches certainly hold up, as Burk puts it.

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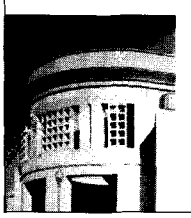

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ber 1939: this now seems less troubling a question, and we are fairly clear that the desire for war and destruction was precisely what did distinguish Hitler and the Nazis from their German predecessors, from Bismarck to Stresemann. The story of the coming of World War II has been definitively told by Donald Cameron Watt in *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938-39*, which appeared in 1989, and Taylor's book is now dated beyond retrieval.

THE EGREGIOUSLY MISDIRECTED thrust of Taylor's book on Hitler casts a shadow over much of his reputation. Together with his popular writings, it accounts for Taylor's diminished standing among scholars. Some critics found him cavalier with inconvenient facts and impatient with nuance, too readily attracted to a conclusion that would shock or annoy. He wrote a biography of his employer, the newspaper tycoon Lord Beaverbrook, that hovered too close to hagiography. He recycled many of his later essays into books, reprising themes and topics with great skill and variety—Burk calls him "the Rossini of history writing"; but this only served to make him seem unserious.

So why should we bother with this man? Why do I impose his long, detailed narrative of nineteenth-century European diplomatic maneuvers upon reluctant twenty-first century American graduates? In the first place, because of his style. Taylor developed for himself a highly distinctive way of writing: short sentences, snappy epigrams, close attention to detail, a minimum of adverbs and sub-clauses. You might think that over five hundred pages such prose would tend to self-parody, but it hardly ever does. And it contrasts tellingly with the often baroque, overwrought, pretentious, self-consciously "professional" cadences of graduate history writing today—a disease brought on in part by the insecurity of the novice, in part by the effort to emulate authors assigned for reading.

The other aspect of Taylor's style that is so pedagogically salutary is what some of his peers found most offensive: the shamelessly opinionated tone of everything that he wrote. Taylor was by his own account "an old-fashioned narrative historian," interested in the history of politics and states. But he also delighted in seeking out and demonstrating long-term developments and patterns. This combination of an interest in close detail and a willingness to venture broad claims is sadly lacking in the contemporary writing of history, which prefers to combine vaguely analytical generalizations with the pusillanimous avoidance of any expression of personal opinion. Reviewing Taylor's *Bismarck*, Michael Howard wrote of "how refreshing it is to read a historian who is not afraid of patterns, epigrams and judgements." That was true in 1955, and it is truer today.

THEN THERE IS Taylor's scholarship. When he came to it, the study of European diplomatic history in England, as in the United States, was sadly undernourished. Thanks to Taylor (and to his near-contemporary William Langer, another of Pribram's students), diplomatic history became, and would remain for two generations, the queen of sub-disciplines. Taylor brought to the field, by his example and by his teaching (Kathleen Burk was his last graduate student), a new professionalism. He researched long series of diplomatic documents. And he undertook that research in the original languages. Thanks in part to his example, such skills are now commonplace among historians of European diplomacy, at least through the present generation of senior teachers. But they were unusual in his day.

The Struggle for Mastery in Europe is a masterpiece for these reasons, and also because it manages ("seemingly effortlessly," as Burk observes) to interweave great masses of detailed information from a plethora of sources into a seamless narrative. It does precisely what all great history must do: tell a story so well and so convincingly that the reader comes away persuaded not only that this is an important and interesting and enlightening tale, but also that there is no other way in which it could be told. This need not *be* the case, of course—history is an art, not a science; but for a history to persuade, it must seem so to the reader. One cannot ask for more.

The problem is that today we settle for so much less. Since high school students learn no history, they must perforce acquire it when they get to college. What, then, are they taught? At one major American university, undergraduates this past semester could study "Masculinities in American History"; "African-American Family Life in the Nineteenth Century"; "Introduction to the Asian-American Experience"; "Women in American Society"; "Gender in the US"; "Studying Gender and Sexuality"; "Race / Slavery in the US"; and "American Indian Policy Since 1750." The history of American foreign policy, or indeed the foreign policy of any country, was nowhere available for study, though students could register for "American History in Transnational Global Perspective."

Where, then, should aspirant historians of diplomacy, or ideas, or national politics, or economic affairs, or anything else that was once at the heart of historical study, go for an education today? To graduate school? In a handful of recalcitrant elite institutions, yes. But almost everywhere else they are more likely to encounter "Media and Society" and "Gender / Culture History in America" and "Women's History Methodology." And even in European History, which has not yet suffered the same degradations as American History, students will learn how to "deconstruct" nationalism long before they ever read a speech by any actual nationalist.

WHY HAS THIS happened? Cultural fashion is certainly to blame, churning out the modish pap that has been flushed into academic tributaries and left to stagnate, clogging up the natural flow of people and ideas. But the predicament derives, too, from the peculiar authority structures of the American historical profession. The United States is the only country outside of German-speaking Central Europe in which the argument from authority can still clinch a historical dispute among professionals. Professors and students alike, when asked to defend an argument or a point of view, all too readily retreat to someone else's prepared positions: "Well, I agree with Professor X that...," or "I am following the methodological approach of Professor Y...," or "But Professor Z has shown that...."

In such circumstances, professorial authority trumps not just competing claims but also native intuition and good sense. This habit of deference is reinforced by all manner of institutionalized ceremonial, culminating in an annual tribal sacrament—the Conference of the American Historical Association—at which the ranks and the privileges of the profession are reaffirmed and celebrated. The American Historical Association has more officers, chairpeople, and committees than a medium-sized corporation. It has its own affirmative action bureau. And through its influence over professional journals of record, it acts as a de facto encouragement to scholarly self-censorship. Panels and papers are scrutinized for gender balance and generally for proper attention to contemporary concerns. Few aspirant or junior historians will want to cause displeasure to those above them by thrusting aside their recommendations.

The outcome is a discipline peculiarly vulnerable to conformity. Newly minted American historians shun unconventional opinions and unfashionable subjects not just because the professional pickings are likely to be slim, but also because there is no external scale against which to assess their own instincts or

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taste. If everyone dismisses diplomatic history as passé, why pick a fight that you are bound to lose? If the books recommended for your edification are turgidly written, why bother to learn to write well? If your mentor talks theory and sneers at "empiricism" (usually in scare quotes), why risk perdition by doing otherwise? If nobody else ridicules the ritual incantation of "race, class, and gender," perhaps you had best take it seriously, too. If "international" has fallen out of favor, then maybe you too had better write "transnational," whatever that means.

If Alan Taylor sought a faculty position in the United States today, he would surely risk unemployment. His specialization (if one can thus describe a field requiring a reading knowledge of five languages and a firm grasp of the historiography of a dozen countries) is not wanted on most American campuses. His working assumption, that relations and conflicts between the great powers are what drive much of modern history, is not just contested; it attracts widespread derision. His interest in states suggests, correctly, a professionally suicidal unconcern for "cultures." And the people whose words and actions he describes were, perforce, elderly white Christian men. After all, and on this at least we are all agreed, they ruled the world. That would seem to be a rather good reason for studying them; but apparently it is not. And even if Taylor were fortunate enough to find employment, his chances of tenure would be small. Someone would be sure to point out that his writing is perilously uncluttered by academic acknowledgements and a little too frequently to be found in accessible media outside the guild.

Taylor, for his part, would be saddened to learn that, while he has gained a few grateful admirers among the American young, theirs is the love that dare not speak its name. His response, I fear, would be to retreat to his little England, and to claim for its historians a purity of soul that never quite was. "In England there are no schools of history: there are only individual historians...," he wrote in 1952. "The English historian calls no man master. He works alone, following his own bent, thinking occasionally of the reader (though not often enough), but rarely of his colleagues and never of his critics."

Was it ever like that? I do not know. Is it like that now? Doubtful. Could it be like that here? Taylor wrote history because it gave him pleasure, and because he enjoyed the trouble he could stir up. I know quite a few fine American historians who write, like Taylor, "for the joy of creation." But, sad to tell, I know none who dream of making trouble. ■

Tablets to Books

By BERNARD KNOX

Libraries in the Ancient World by Lionel Casson

(Yale University Press, 177 pp., $22.95)

ONE OF THE inscribed clay tablets in the library of Ashurbanipal, who was the king of Assyria from 668 B.C. to 627 B.C., reads as follows: "Clay tablet of Ashurbanipal, King of the World, King of Assyria, who trusts in Ashur and Ninlil.... Whoever removes [the tablet], writes his names in place of my name, may Ashur and Ninlil, angered and grim, cast him down, erase his name, his seed, in the land." Evidently the earliest libraries (and writing on clay tablets dates from before 3000 B.C.) had to deal with the problem that still bedevils their successors: theft. Another tablet shows that a private library, which allowed friends to take a tablet home, had to deal with late returns: "He who fears Anu and Antu will return it to the owner's house the same day." And deliberate damage was a problem too, as another tablet testifies in detail:

> He who breaks this tablet or puts it in water or rubs it until you cannot recognize it [and] cannot make it be understood ... may the gods of heaven and earth and the... gods of Assyria [the tablet names ten of them] curse him with a curse that cannot be relieved, terrible and merciless, as long as he lives, may they let his name, his seed, be carried off from the land, may they put his flesh in a dog's mouth.

These intriguing documents (and many more like them) appear in the first chapter of Lionel Casson's comprehensive and engrossing survey of the evidence for the history of the library from the clay tablets of Uruk, Ebla, Hattusas, Ashur, and Niniveh to the parchment manuscripts in the monasteries of the late Middle Ages, which had preserved much of the literature of Greece and Rome for the scholars of the Renaissance and the printing press. That evidence, literary and archaeological, published and discussed in books, periodicals, and excavation reports in many languages, is not abundant; and its interpretation is often disputed. In many cases, as Casson points out, "we are reduced to inference based on faint clues, at times to pure speculation." But Casson is a reliable guide, and when he does turn to speculation the result is always persuasive. With the general reader in mind, he has relegated reference to sources and scholarly debate to seventeen pages of bibliographical citations following his text, which, uncluttered by footnotes, offers a fast-moving, informative, and often entertaining narrative enriched by thirty carefully selected illustrations that offer vivid images of ancient books, their readers, and their libraries.

The clay tablets of the Sumerians and of their successive conquerors—Akkadians, Babylonians, Hittites, Assyrians—were not designed for easy reading. Patterns of wedge-shaped indentations in the clay represented syllables, not letters (alphabets did not appear until the first millennium); and the same sign often represented two or more different sounds. But the clay tablets had one great advantage: fire, the usual accompaniment to sack and conquest, only hardened them, conferring upon them the permanence that allows us to read them still.

Most of the tablets that have surfaced in one excavation after another are single documents, administrative, legal, or financial—"bills, deliveries, receipts, inventories, loans, marriage contracts, divorce settlements, court judgments and so on." Yet it was on clay tablets that the great Sumerian epic *Gilgamesh* was preserved through the centuries, to appear in the library of Ashurbanipal "written down and collated in the palace of Ashurbanipal, King of the World, King of Assyria." The tablets remained the only medium for the preservation of records, and of religious and literary texts, until the conquest of the region by Alexander

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in the fourth century B.C. and its rule by Hellenistic kings, whose Greek bureaucrats used papyrus for their documents. The tablets were then discarded as useless and they disappeared, to be discovered by archaeologists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The new medium introduced by the Greeks was papyrus, and it was as old as the clay tablets: it had been in use in Egypt from about 3000 B.C. Papyrus was a plant that grew in profusion in the Nile. Its thick stalk was cut along its length into razor-thin slices, and they were glued end-to-end to form a roll. On the inside of the roll, letters were written in vertical columns from left to right, and the completed roll, with a title tag attached, could be stored with others in a box or a bucket and shelved. Many Egyptian papyrus documents—administrative, literary, and especially religious documents—have survived; but we have no information about libraries, except a passage in a Greek historian writing long after Egypt had become a Roman province. He mentions a library of Ramses II (1279–1213 B.C.), a "sacred library" that was described on an inscription as a Clinic for the Soul.

The most famous library of the ancient world was located in Egypt, at Alexandria; but it was the creation of a Greek-speaking king, Ptolemy I, who, when Alexander died in Babylon in 323 B.C. and his generals staked their claims to the vast territories he had conquered, took Egypt as his share. When he founded the library at Alexandria, the Greek-speaking world had been literate for a long time. Its twenty-four-letter alphabet, adapted some time in the eighth century B.C. from a North Semitic model (it had signs for consonants only), had made possible the preservation—and possibly the creation—of the two Homeric epics. The bookstalls in the marketplace at Athens in the late fifth century offered copies of the lyric poets Sappho and Alcaeus as well as the plays of the tragic and comic poets of Athens.

There had been private libraries in Greece before Ptolemy's government-funded institution. Euripides had a large collection of books, as we know from a passage in *The Frogs* of Aristophanes, and Aristotle had an even larger collection in his philosophical school, the Lyceum. But Ptolemy's library was the first that had the resources of a powerful state to support it. The library was a part of the *Mouseion*, or "home of the Muses"; this installation housed poets, scholars, and scientists invited from all over the Greek world, supported them royally, and gave them access to the library. A cynical Greek poet (one suspects that he had hoped to be invited but was not) described these visitors (in Casson's lively version) as

> . . . the scribbling bookworms who are found in Egypt's populous nation

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Pompeian couple with stylus, wooden tablet, and roll

> in endless debate as they flock around the muses' feeding station

This prototype of the modern think tank, with its own library, soon became, under the second and third Ptolemies, the intellectual center of the Greek world. Scholars, poets, and scientists from other cities were installed there, and the library's holdings increased in geometric progression as its agents scoured bookshops wherever Greek was spoken. The dock officials at Alexandria confiscated all books found on board incoming ships, replacing them with copies and keeping the originals in the Library. In the pursuit of older (and therefore more accurate) copies, the Ptolemies would go to any lengths. Ptolemy III asked the Athenians to lend him, for copying, the official versions of the plays of the great Athenian dramatists of the fifth century B.C. The Athenians demanded and received an immense cash deposit to ensure their safe return, but Ptolemy sent back the copies and kept the originals.

The scholars living at the Mouseion worked on the material that poured in from every quarter to produce standard texts of the great poets of the Greek past, notably of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, of which many different versions were in circulation. Under Ptolemy II, the poet Callimachus drew up what was, as far as we know, the first library catalogue; it filled 120 papyrus books, five times as many as the *Iliad*. This catalogue has not survived, but quotations from it show that it divided the books into sections—dramatic, epic, and lyric poets; orators, philosophers, and historians, and a miscellaneous category that included cookbooks. The authors in each category were listed in alphabetical order (of the first letter of the name only: full alphabetical order is an innovation of the second century A.D.). Each entry gave the author's name, city, and a brief biographical sketch followed by a list of the author's works in alphabetical order. The list of the seventy-three titles of the plays of Aeschylus that has come down to us almost certainly reproduces Callimachus's catalogue entry.

Alexandria was not the only city in the Hellenistic world with a library. The Greek city of Pergamum, built on a splendid site on the coast of what is now Turkey, also had a library, which under the city's kings, the Attalids, tried to compete with Alexandria. When, in the first century B.C., Mark Antony, the ruler of the eastern half of the Roman empire, gave all its books to Cleopatra for her library in Alexandria, they numbered 200,000. (When Callimachus made the catalogue for the library of the Mouseion, the total was 490,000). But the Pergamum library, though outpaced and shortlived, had made an important contribution to the future of books and libraries. Perhaps because Alexandria slowed or stopped supplies of papyrus, perhaps because papyrus became too expensive, Pergamum began to copy its texts

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on a material that had long been in use in the region: treated animal skins, or parchment—a word ultimately derived from the Latin *pergamena*, the Roman name for it. Unlike papyrus, it does not disintegrate when wet, nor does it wear and fray with constant use; and so it became the material on which the remains of Greek and Roman literature survived to be printed in the Renaissance.

PERGAMUM IS IMPORTANT for the history of libraries for another reason, too. Its building, or rather the ruins of its building, survived, to be uncovered by the archaeologist's spade: it is the earliest library building that we can study. It was part of a temple of, appropriately enough, the goddess Athena, whose huge statue stood in the largest room, which was designed for receptions, lectures, and conferences. The books were stored, on shelves fitted into niches in the walls, in three smaller rooms, 13.4 meters long and from 7 to 10 meters wide. A rough calculation suggests that they may have held about 200,000 scrolls, the quantity that Antony sent off to Cleopatra. All three rooms had access to an open-air roofed space where, between the columns and in good light, the books could be read.

Both of the great libraries were designed for the use of scholars and a privileged elite. Casson raises the interesting question of whether there were any such facilities for the general public. The evidence is scattered and fragmentary, but it suggests that in the second and first centuries B.C. there were libraries, great and small, that in many places in the Greek world served a larger public. One of them, on the island of Cos off the west coast of Asia Minor, was supported by local citizens with gifts of money and books. The evidence consists of an inscription recording the names of the donors; and similar inscriptions have been found in Athens, on the island of Rhodes, and elsewhere.

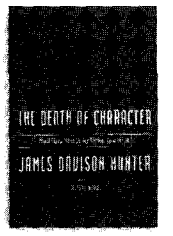
Casson suggests that these publicly supported libraries were connected with the city's gymnasium, an institution for young men with facilities for athletic training that in many cities had become by Hellenistic times centers for education with rooms for lectures and conferences. In Athens, in the center of town near the Agora, stood the Ptolemaeon, evidently a gift from one of the Ptolemies; it was a gymnasium with a library. Inscriptions record donations to the library, especially an annual gift of a hundred books by the *epheboi*, or young men of good family originally enrolled for military training but later for civic education. An inscription that almost certainly concerns this library gives an idea of its contents: it was primarily a literary collection, including plays of Euripides and Sophocles as well as by Diphilus and Menander, the stars of the fourth-century comedy of manners.

In the course of the second century B.C., most of these Greek-speaking cities and kingdoms had lost their independence and become part of the Roman empire; and the most important exception, Egypt, became a Roman province in 30 B.C. Still, as the Roman poet Horace was to put it: "Greece, once captured, captured her wild conqueror/and brought the arts to rustic Latium." The Roman upper classes learned Greek and read the Greek writers. Latin literature began in 240 B.C. with a translation of some Greek plays by Livius Andronicus, a Greek prisoner of war; and later he translated the *Odyssey*, creating for it a Latin equivalent of the Homeric hexameter line, the meter of Lucretius and Virgil. Romans bought Greek books, and there must soon have been many private libraries in Italy.

We know of one library that was not bought but appropriated. In 168 B.C., the Roman general Aemilius Paulus defeated Perseus, the king of Macedon, and added to the Roman empire a country that had been ruled by Philip and his son Alexander the Great, and before them by Archelaus, at whose court the Athenian tragic poets Agathon and Euripides spent the desperate final months of the Peloponnesian War. Both of Aemilius's sons (one of them, Scipio Aemilianus, would later command the army that destroyed Carthage) were enthusiasts for Greek literature, and their father allowed them to ship the whole of the royal library home for their own personal use and that of their friends.

There were other huge private libraries in Rome that had been acquired in similar fashion. Sulla returned from the sack of Athens in 86 B.C. with the library of Aristotle, and later Lucullus returned from campaigns in the Middle East with a huge collection that he, and later his son, threw open to visitors. There were also huge private libraries that were built up by purchase or by copying from the holdings of friends—Cicero's library, for example, or the even larger collection of his friend Atticus, who lived in Greece. Cicero's collection was large enough to need the skills of a Greek specialist named Tyrannio, who had organized the library of Sulla.

YET THE IDEA of a public library must be credited to Julius Caesar. It makes its first appearance as one of his projects when, with the defeat of the last republican army in Spain in 45 B.C., he returned to Rome as its dictator. His design called for two separate rooms: one for Latin, one for Greek. His assassination, on the Ides of March in 44 B.C.,



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scuttled the project; but it was revived and brought to completion by Asinius Pollio, a supporter of Caesar and a friend of the poets Catullus, Horace, and Virgil, who returned from a campaign in the East with enormous booty in 39 B.C. Its separate rooms for Greek and Latin served as the model for all subsequent Roman libraries.

When Octavian, later to assume the title Augustus, became the ruler of the Roman empire in 30 B.C., he built not one but two public libraries. One of them was on the Palatine hill, where Augustus himself lived in a palace complex. Enough of this library remains to show that it was a new model, the pattern of the future. Instead of small rooms opening onto a patio or colonnade, it had two large rooms, their inner walls containing niches for shelves and plenty of floor space for tables, chairs, and readers. More libraries were built under Augustus's successor Tiberius, and Vespasian built one after the sack of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The remains of Trajan's library, which was created in 112 A.D., lie under the surface of the street on both sides of his column in Rome.

But there were many other public libraries in Rome. Just as the Athenians had libraries in their gymnasiums, the Romans had them in their public baths. There had been many bathing establishments in Rome under the Republic, but they were for people who could pay. As part of the imperial policy of keeping the population of Rome quiet—the famous policy of "bread and circuses"—the emperors built free public baths on a lavish scale. Unlike the Greek gymnasium, these institutions were open to men and women alike; and in addition to the essential warm rooms, hot rooms, sweat rooms, cold plunges, massage rooms, and the rest, they offered gardens, courts for exercise or games, rooms for meetings, recitals, or lectures, and libraries. The ruins of the baths of Trajan (109 A.D.) include the remains of the usual two-chambered library; and an even larger one, with rooms measuring 36.3 meters by 21.9 meters, was built in the baths of Caracalla (212 A.D.), where, in the Roman tradition of entertainment in the baths, on a warm moonlit night on July 7, 1999, the Three Tenors performed the first of their many concerts before an audience of 6,000 Romans.

There were public libraries outside Rome, of course, not only in Italy but all over the empire. Hadrian gave one to Athens; and visitors to the site of Ephesus, an important Roman administrative center on the coast of Asia Minor, can see the magnificent library building that has been reconstructed from the ruins. We know also that there was a library and a university at Carthage, which had been rebuilt after Augustus resettled it. In these libraries all over the empire, a slow but momentous change in the format of the book was under way.

That change was the replacement of the scroll by the codex. *Codex* is the Latin word for writing tablets—thin wooden boards of equal size, covered with a thin layer of wax on which letters could be inscribed. These boards were held together by string passed through holes at the top of the boards. The papyrus codex or the parchment codex was made by placing sheets of the material in a pile, folding it over and sewing it along the fold. The usual number of sheets was four, which produced eight pages; these units could be sewn together to produce a large book.

In one of his short poems known as epigrams, the Roman poet Martial, writing in the first century A.D., tells his readers to buy his new book at the shop of Secundus, and he also tells them why. The book is a novelty—it is not only parchment, but also in codex form.

> You want to take my poems
> wherever you go
> as companions, say, on a trip to
> some distant land?
> Buy this. It's packed tight into
> parchment pages, so,
> leave your rolls at home, for this
> takes just one hand.

A codex was easier to read, turning the page rather than unrolling one side and rolling the other up; it was more convenient for reference back and forth; and it was easier to copy. In fact, copying from papyrus to papyrus must have been extremely difficult; it was surely done by dictation. Another advantage of the codex was its compactness: Martial mentions a parchment codex that contains all fifteen books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which would have needed several rolls in the older format.

Still, for all the obvious superiority of the codex to the roll, ancient readers were slow to embrace it. "It took a long time," says Casson, "from about A.D. 100 to after 400, for the codex to supplant the roll." But there was one very signficant exception to the almost unanimous rejection of the codex: the Christian community. The earliest preserved Bibles are dated to the turn of the second to the third centuries, and they are all codices. And over the following centuries the codex continued to serve as the standard form for Christian writing. It could furnish a preacher with all he needed in a single volume, in which reference from one passage to another was easy.

There was a large Christian community in Rome in Martial's time, and it may well have been that the bookseller who offered Martial's book as a codex had taken his cue from the Christians. And as the centuries went by, one more important change took place on the library shelves:

Flight

If blackness
were every blankness, and not
all colors, if

wings were parts to be lifted
easily from the body, then brought
back home, and the wings

tipped first in yellow,
in red, after,
would any of these make the bird

more yours?
If the bird is native here,
and you are native,

so that seeing it now is not
a first time, seeing,
what happened then, that since

has acted upon memory
as on photographs
will a creek they've fallen into,

the water bleeding, making
ghost of now the tree somebody
climbs halfway,

the parked car others take
forever boarding, and the field raveling,
prairie, then sea....

What would be different, wouldn't
each change equal ruin the way
it does, and the hands that clap

still be your own,
clapping? To watch the bird
undone, undoing—isn't *that* it?

Carl Phillips

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the replacement of the perishable papyrus by the more durable parchment. Casson cites one instance, in fact, of large-scale replacement: Jerome's account, written about 385 A.D., of a library that "was partially ruined, and Acacius and Euzoius, priests of the church, undertook to renew it in parchment."

In the second half of the third century A.D., the Roman empire was torn apart by civil wars between claimants to supreme power, and was also engaged in wars against new aggressive kingdoms in the East. By the end of the century, the empire had broken in half—the West, ruled from Milan or Ravenna, the East from Constantinople, the new city built by the emperor Constantine, who decreed tolerance for the Christians and enlisted them in the organization of his empire, which lasted until 1453 A.D., when the city was taken by the Turks. It was there that a selection of the literary treasures of ancient Greece had been preserved—the two Homeric epics, a small selection of Attic drama, the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, and the complete works of Plato and Aristotle. In the century before the city's fall, teachers of Greek and copies of the manuscripts reached Renaissance Venice, Florence, and Rome, and this remnant of a great literature was studied, expounded, and eventually printed.

But the western half of the Roman empire had no such long life. By the beginning of the fifth century A.D., France, Spain, Italy, and Roman North Africa had been overrun by successive hordes of peoples from the North and East—Goths, Visigoths, Ostrogoths Suevi, Vandals—who left destruction in their wake. In the ensuing chaos—the breakdown of civil government, the sack of cities—the preservation of libraries and books was not a major concern. Rome itself was sacked, and by the late sixth century its population had dropped to 30,000 from more than a million, the figure for the first and second centuries.

But one type of library did survive—in the monasteries. Pacomius, the founder of monasticism, ordered that every monk should be, or become, literate. It was a rule adopted also by Benedict, the founder of the great monastery on Monte Cassino. Many monastic libraries were small, their holdings limited to sacred and patristic texts; but this was not true of the library founded in the last years of the sixth century by Cassiodorus, a rich and cultivated Roman who had held high political office but late in life founded a monastery in southern Italy that "encompassed breadth of knowledge along with religion."

Cassiodorus emphasized writing as well as reading; his monastery included a scriptorium for the copying of manuscripts, both religious and secular. His private library, which he donated, contained texts of all the major pagan Latin authors, and also Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates as well as his own book, the *Institutiones*, which emphasized the importance of reading, the liberal arts, and copying, and had an enormous influence on monastic life. Later monasteries founded at Bobbio near Pavia, St. Gallen in Switzerland, and Fulda in Germany followed his recommendation. It is to the holdings amassed in such monasteries, Casson observes, that "we owe ... most of what has survived of the writings in Latin and Greek from the ancient world, particularly in Latin."

And what happened to the library in the Mouseion at Alexandria, the greatest collection of books in the ancient world? Our sources differ, but it seems most likely that it was destroyed sometime around 270 A.D., when the troops of the emperor Aurelian fought those of Queen Zenobia of Palmyra in the palace area, where the Mouseion was located. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, our main historical source for the period, the whole area was devastated. The other large library in Alexandria, in the temple of Serapis, was demolished and its books were burned by a Christian mob urged on by the patriarch Theophilus in 391 A.D. Yet Arabic sources speak of a library still in existence in 640 A.D., when the city was taken by the Muslim Arabs, conquerors of the Middle East. Arabic and Greek sources describe the attempt of John Philoponos, an aged Aristotelian scholar, to persuade the conquerors to spare the books. He was unsuccessful. An order came from the Caliph Omar to send them to the public baths of Alexandria (of which there may have been as many as four thousand) to be used as fuel. Only the books of Aristotle were to be preserved. The library must have been large, because the books kept the fires blazing for six months. ■

Just the Facts

By Michael Ravitch

Plowing the Dark by Richard Powers

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 415 pp., $25)

"He had a mind so fine no idea could violate it," T. S. Eliot once wrote in praise of Henry James. Nowadays this would be no compliment. Inwardness is out of fashion; formal purity has few admirers; aesthetic subtlety is not what our day demands. Instead, novelists are expected to be scouts of information, prophets of explanation; the serious novel attracts attention only insofar as it provides what Henry Luce liked to call Big Thoughts. In the latest novel by Richard Powers, for example, we can find riffs on architectural history, global economics, higher mathematics, and meteorology, and also on the caves of Lascaux, musical fugues, and the Gulf War. Here is a mind so dense no idea can go unmentioned.

Powers has been justly celebrated as one of our brainier novelists. His books ooze with cleverness. Elaborate thematic patterns structure the flow of the often esoteric data. Powers is never afraid to tackle material that others might deem inauspicious. *The Gold Bug Variations* compared the discovery of DNA's double helix and the music of Bach. *Gain* used the details of soap manufacturing to forge a story of capitalism and cancer. *Galatea 2.2* grappled with artificial intelligence. And now *Plowing the Dark* takes place in a virtual-reality lab.

Scientific subjects are popular among postmodern literary types, who often get the details wrong. Powers, by contrast, appears to possess genuine scientific expertise. Mathematics and physics are not just gaudy abstractions for him; they are concrete experiences. At once enthusiastically familiar with science and scientists, a genuine insider, and yet as skeptical as any deconstructor, Powers neatly bridges the divide between the "two cultures" of intellectual life. The appeal of such a figure is easy to compre-

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hend: an expert from the realm of hard facts arrived in the land of negative capability, uniquely positioned to explore the anxieties of the digital age. In terms of story and character, Powers's novels offer few delights; but what they do very skillfully is represent the flood of information in which we are all currently drowning. The question posed by his work is how, and whether, that delicate and vigorous genre, the novel, can survive such an inundation.

PLOWING THE DARK is a fine example of zeitgeist fiction: novels so intent on pinning down the spirit of the age that they generate no internal imaginative life. Powers has written a kind of historical novel of the late 1980s. It alternates between two stories, unrelated but characteristic of the decade. In Seattle, computer geeks and disillusioned artists construct a virtual-reality laboratory. In Beirut, a young American is held hostage by Islamic terrorists, blindfolded and isolated. Usually, when a novel has dual tracks, they intersect at some point, or at least they share some common terrain. In this case, the only connection is that both stories serve to illustrate the writer's apocalyptic vision of history.

Powers is often compared to Thomas Pynchon, but Pynchon is a fabulist, an allegorist, while Powers is a diligent realist, a faithful reporter. Powers has the slightly artificial tone of Pynchon without the rich vein of humor and fantasy. His characters seem to interest him only as vehicles for meditating on Big Ideas and Great Events. Nothing very exciting happens in Seattle, except that the assembled intellectuals pontificate on the dramatic events of 1989–1990. Optimists compare the fall of communism to "a fractal tendril" or "a self-extending experiment." One scientist describes the spread of democracy as "a long polypeptide growing itself out of side chains." Another dismisses it as "nothing more than a glorified product-promotional placement."

So much timeliness wears thin. We are told how "millennial developments began popping up in doses massive and frequent enough to string along any event addict." But the real event addict is the novelist, copping a fix whenever his own story seems inadequate. Clever commentaries on the fate of civilization pop up on every page of Powers's novel, but they have all the depth of a newspaper editorial. Powers is making a point about the information age, how our inner lives have become colonized by the unending spectacle of far-off news; but it is not an insight that provides a very satisfying premise for a novel. His cerebral characters are no more interesting than talking heads. The urgency of his narrative is not created by any drama belonging to the novel; it is borrowed from the glamour of external events.

And where the drama seems more distant, the prose compensates by becoming more self-important. When tanks roll through Tiananmen Square, for example, we are treated to this solemn bit of grandiosity: "A small, stunned congregation assembled ... surrounded on all sides by planes of video.... She saw a scene that haunted her long after Tehran and Tiananmen faded to black: a dozen stunned lives, huddled in a picture-pitched tent, trapped in the rising information flood." Forget that little skirmish in China. The real horror was taking place back home: we were watching too much television.

POWERS'S HEROINE IS a disenchanted artist named Adie Klarpol who is invited to work for the computer giant TetraSys. She will be the illustrator for the "prototype cavern: 'a second-generation, experimental, total-immersion environment modeler.'" Initially hostile to technology, she becomes enthusiastic about virtual reality. Now, an artist who has lost faith in her art might well be a stirring character; but we never get to know Adie Klarpol well enough to care. Her inner life is indicated only by clichés. Long ago she had believed in "the pencil's ability to redraw the world," but after a successful show in SoHo, she burned all her artworks and became a commercial illustrator. What disillusioned her? The "art mafia," the commercialism of the art world, and so on. It is all rushed and formulaic: a few details of personal history, and bingo, a protagonist! Unfortunately, you cannot program a literary character as methodically as you can program a computer.

Adie is cynical, brilliant, cerebral, emotionally crippled. So is every other character in the novel. They can all discuss Mary Cassatt as fluently as they can discuss z-buffer algorithms. They all quote Yeats at will. The implausibility is not as much of a problem as the monotony. Needless to say, these people are also suitably multicultural—Korean, Italian, Irish, Armenian; but their ethnicity is only a crude marker to distinguish them. Their style of talking is all the same, whether they are speaking about Van Gogh, the Berlin Wall, or Euler angles. Since there is no depth of character, there is no subtext to their conversation. All the self-congratulatingly brilliant chatter becomes suffocating. The dialogue spools on, page after page, like a television sitcom for the overeducated with a built-in laugh track. ("All art is Euclid's baby." And then: "I can think of at least a couple of dubious paternity suits.")

Powers takes his brainy characters too seriously. He is too admiring of their knowingness. He does not ridicule them, and because they cannot be ridiculous, they cannot be free. They are politely intelligent, reasonable, a bit grumpy but basically tame. They have no significant folly. They are not outrageous or blind, not comic or tragic. But in truth, the characters in this novel are incidental to it. *Plowing the Dark* is not really a story about the fate of its people.

IT IS, RATHER, a story about the fate of a particular technology. Will it succeed? How will it be put to use? Will it change the world? At first the lab can manage only broad strokes and flat façades, but slowly the simulacra become more sophisticated and lifelike, until the flowers seem to shiver in the wind. Eager to explain how this imitation of life is accomplished, Powers dives into the technical details with relish. Here he is at his best and at his worst. He is utterly convincing in his knowledge: what the laboratory looks like, how the engineers dress, how they argue, how the machines work. But all this exposition tyrannizes his prose. The book begins to feel like a four-hundred-page magazine article.

Information may be the currency of our age, but it is a fool's gold. Powers has plenty to say about the world, but he does not turn his ideas into aesthetic experience. This is a Potemkin village of the mind, two-dimensional scenery without mystery or depth. The internal monologues do not capture the suppleness of consciousness or the irony of character. Here is what one scientist thinks about when he is alone:

> Economic theory stopped too soon, reducing the world's mad exchange to mere Supply, Demand, and Price.... The classical economist's answer to his functions' functional impotence consisted of adding an infinite series of ever-smaller local factors to the mix, calculated to ever-higher levels of ex post facto multidimensional exactitude. And still the experts couldn't put the dart inside the bull's-eye any more often than your average Thursday night side-slinger down at the local.

The ostentatious technical jargon challenges and flatters the reader's intelligence. But even the most brilliant talker becomes boring if he never stops to listen. Powers barely bothers with the illusion that he is entering another character's thoughts. The reader eventually has a sense of being lectured at by a monologist, and bullied into silence.

Perhaps this is appropriate in a novel

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about solitude. *Plowing the Dark* is structured by a series of lonely rooms: the prisoner's cell, the virtual-reality cavern, Van Gogh's bedroom at Arles. Its human interactions are never anything but awkward and contrived; only its descriptions of the solitary life reach a lyrical intensity: "In the warm room, you are the doer of all acts, the receiver of all action, the glow that lights these sanctuary walls, the warmth these eager trappings radiate, the fading coal, the lone heat source in a world gone zero and random." The confinement of the hostage Taimur Martin is the central emblem of the novel's vision. What he undergoes physically, the other characters undergo emotionally: abandonment, imprisonment, isolation, the struggle to sustain the imagination in a "zero and random" world.

THE SECTIONS DESCRIBING Taimur Martin's captivity are the most interesting parts of the book. A teacher at a university in Beirut, Taimur Martin does not know why he has been abducted by the Sacred Conflict, a fundamentalist group, or if he will ever be released. He spends years chained to a bed, blindfolded, on a diet of gruel. He endures sickness, torture, isolation; and all the while he endeavors to preserve his sanity. He tries to remember songs and poems, to keep track of the date, to make sense of his absurd destiny. He begs his captors for something to read. He contemplates his past, and he reaches bleak conclusions about the human condition.

The gripping prison narrative comes as a relief after so much idle verbosity. It turns out that when Powers has a story to tell, his prose can be vigorous and concise. And yet there is something hollow about even this story, even at its most successful. The research is, as always, impeccable; but the final result is not nearly as moving as Brian Keenan's *An Evil Cradling*, the extraordinary memoir by a former hostage from which Powers has evidently drawn details and incidents. There is nothing wrong with a writer of fiction drawing on research in order to tell a story, but there is something wrong when the research is more intense and more imaginative than the fiction.

Taimur Martin has a few coordinates of identity (an ethnicity, an ex-girlfriend), but no particular individuality. His predicament makes him sympathetic, but it does not give him personality. While his thoughts are often interesting, they do not belong to him any more than Adie Klarpol's thoughts belong to her: they all emanate from the same brain, from the ventriloquist behind the curtain. Powers has a complicated mind and a gift for wordplay, but when it comes to narrative he suffers from a crushing lack of imagination. *Plowing the Dark* exhibits a dull fidelity to fact: all the details are in place, but there is no crazy fantasy, no unexpected compression, no interesting ambiguities. After reading *An Evil Cradling*, we care about Brian Keenan not because he has suffered, but because he has something to teach us: how at the extremity of pain and terror, he apprehended a moral value, an experience of love, what he calls "an enchantment of humanity." But Taimur Martin learns merely that "there is a truth only solitude reveals ... the fact of our abandonment here in a far corner of sketched space." The language is fancier, but the notion is less interesting. There is nothing surprising in learning that a hostage feels abandoned and alone.

POWERS BELONGS TO a current in contemporary literature that might be called encyclopedic postmodernism: quantity over quality, information over insight. But perhaps it is really encyclopedic pre-modernism: the long technical passages of *Plowing the Dark* recall an age when the novel was a closer cousin to journalism, when the novelist might interrupt his story with a lecture on social conditions or scientific progress. Balzac begins *Lost Illusions* with a long explanation of the development of the printing press. But Balzac, even at his most discursive and "scientific," never loses sight of the human interest. We care about his character's poignant and comic attempt to discover a new way to manufacture paper in a way that we never care about Powers's virtual reality experiment, where nothing human is at stake.

Powers from has been praised for the virtuosity of his language. His verbal fireworks can be delightful. Yet too often his associations run amok, without any real purpose except self-display, and eloquence sours into *Time* magazine cliché. The Berlin Wall, for example, is "that forty-year-old scar on a continent's heart." The only passage describing Seattle sounds as if it might have come straight from a tourist brochure: we rush from the City Center to Woodland Park Zoo, the Asian Art Museum to the Frye. Followed by a list of streets: "Jefferson, James, Cherry, Columbia, Marion, Madison, Spring, Seneca...." No perception about a particular place underlies this list; there is no freshness of observation. All the information seems to have arrived secondhand.

Like a child afflicted with an anxiety disorder, or a compulsion to dazzle and to impress, Powers is constantly making lists: the streets of Seattle, the terms of architecture, the names of painters. Even Powers's best novel, *Galatea 2.2*, suffers from the same know-it-all quality. In that book, the narrator, a novelist named Richard Powers attempts to teach a computer to master the Great Books. *Galatea 2.2* has an interesting fantasy at its core: what would happen if a computer developed self-awareness? Powers envisions the computer as a modern-day Frankenstein creature, knowing its own monstrosity, burdened by the tragedy of consciousness. This is an imaginative story at least, and even a moving story, a story that is not immediately and entirely obvious.

When a writer provides meanings instead of stories, he is like a magician who reveals his tricks instead of performing them. In *Plowing the Dark*, the artfulness is all out in the open. There is nothing for the reader to discover; we are always conscious of the writer manipulating us. Near the end of the book, a poignant scene occurs when Adie Klarpol visits her ex-husband, who is dying from multiple sclerosis. But then we learn that the nursing home is located in Lebanon, Ohio, "a town whose chief industry had once been utopianism." Get it? In case the reader has not yet made the connection with the original Lebanon, where Taimur Martin is still a prisoner, one character cries out, at the sight of a maple tree: "The Cedars of Lebanon!" The comparison of the hostage in his cell to the ex-husband in his ruined body might have been effective if we had been left to figure it out for ourselves. Powers goes on to mention that there are thirty-two Lebanons in the United States. Future graduate students will thank him for the fact, but ordinary readers may find their capacity for enthrallment somewhat hindered by the vice of explanation.

VIRTUAL REALITY, RETARDED by technical obstacles and overshadowed by the greater significance of the Internet, has faded from public attention. But in Powers's book the prospect of an immersible simulacrum represents nothing less than the renewal of civilization: "A place wide enough to house human restlessness. A device to defeat matter and turn dreams real." The rhetoric continues at a millenarian pitch: "Mankind's tenure here had come of age ... humanity's final victory over the tyranny of matter ... the most significant jump in human communication since the bulking up of the cerebellum." Powers conjures up a bizarre vision of the future: the mind unleashed from the bondage of the mortal body, the transcendence of spirit through technology.

But what most interests Powers about virtual reality is its application to art—more precisely, its challenge to art. At TetraSys, virtual reality seems to exist for

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one purpose only, the recreation of great works of art: Henri Rousseau's *Dream*, Van Gogh's *Bedroom at Arles*, the Hagia Sophia. This prompts questions about art in the age of the machine. What does it mean when the computer can outperform the artist, when "humming boxes" can capture the distinct brushstroke of every famous artist and convert the two-dimensional canvas into an interactive environment? Has science rendered art obsolete? Does this synthesis of art and science represent "the highest tide of everything that collective ingenuity had yet learned how to pull off"?

ANY READER OF science fiction can predict what comes next. Technology, despite its utopian promise, turns out to be a vehicle for capitalism, militarism and other evil things. TetraSys, it turns out, has not been paying Adie Klarpol to "make something beautiful" for Emersonian reasons. Adie comes to this shocking realization when the smart bombs of the Gulf War burst onto her television screen. She feels that their virtual-reality research is responsible: "The world machine had used her." The refuge of the imagination is over. She destroys her virtual reality programs just as she had burned her artwork long before. Both art and science have been fatally contaminated by commerce. Neither art nor science can offer transcendence.

This clunky disillusionment is as absurd as the buildup that preceded it. Is the commercial use of science necessarily a sin? Haven't artists always sold their work? Powers insists upon the artificial purity of the imagination so much that he ends up diminishing its significance. If we cannot become pure spirit, then we must be rotten flesh. At one point Powers describes "the imagination's room" as a place where "all things work out.... In this room, nothing bleeds. Nothing rots.... Lost children find their parents again.... All countries move steadily towards democratic free markets.... Art constantly refreshes itself...." But in the end this unreal room is ultimately a "room of no consequence in the least. Of making no difference in the whole known world." Powers reduces imagination to a mere fantasy, a faculty for delusion; only a means of escape, never a form of engagement.

The ending of *Galatea 2.2* is very revealing. The computer, named Helen, absorbs the entire canon of Western literature in less than a year. Along the way, she struggles to understand deep and subtle complexities: jokes and sorrows, love and self-consciousness. But at the end Helen complains that something is missing, and so the narrator feeds her "leading weekly magazines" and television transcripts. "I could postpone no longer.... She needed to know how little literature had, in fact, to do with the real." When Helen "reads" about a racial beating, she shuts down. Having learned the "falsehood" of literature and that life is actually "sick and random," she commits computer suicide. What is strange here is the presumption that "leading weekly magazines" tell her more about humanity than all of Western literature. Powers writes as though literature were only a sugar coating for the bitter pill of reality. But does *Time* really dramatize social injustice more effectively than Dickens? Is a newspaper story truly more tragic than *King Lear?* Isn't Euripides about as "sick and random" as you could possibly want?

Our age is saturated with information, and yet ever hungry for more. Somehow, despite the news programs and the "reality shows" that fill prime-time television, life seems to become less real. While science accelerates at an astounding pace, ordinary people are baffled by the machines upon which we all depend. This general panic about knowledge is the source of Richard Powers's appeal. He ties together bewildering developments and explains incomprehensible technologies. His linear associations and neat structures are reassuring to those seeking clarification and organization. Addicts of the information age, we begin to forget that there is another kind of literature possible, one in which we must uncover our own illuminations, in which saying less means knowing more. Such literature does not offer facts or theories; it offers experiences. Like the most daring science, it does not know its answers in advance, but re-imagines the world freshly. In a world in which facts become obsolete by the hour, this is the information we most urgently need. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 6

proposed by George W. Bush, Jeb Bush, or anyone else—are immediately branded as irresponsible, too expensive, or for the rich. What we're seeing in the heated objections to tax cuts is not objective analysis of irresponsible versus responsible fiscal policy; it's fundamental liberal philosophy, which holds that money belongs in the hands of government, not in the hands of the people. Every dollar given back in tax cuts is a dollar that liberal true believers can't use to "make a difference." It's also a dollar that the power brokers can't use to purchase loyal (and, often, liberal) voting constituencies. If the national debt were paid off and Social Security and Medicare were shored up, liberals would still find some other excuse not to cut taxes, simply because they don't want the government to suffer any loss of revenue.

I would like to see TNR engender a debate on what the maximum tax rate should be, above which taxes should not rise, no matter how many shouts of "need" are heard in the land. Is any wealth personal, or is it all societal? Put a number on it. The question is academic, but the answer might be revealing.

ROBERT B. BEATTY
Naperville, Illinois

Even worse

TO THE EDITORS:

In "The Perfect & the Good" (April 2), the editors argue that opponents of campaign finance reform cannot be sincere in their First Amendment objections if they also oppose public subsidies for politicians. But, from a First Amendment perspective, the only thing as bad as preventing the exercise of political speech is forcing people to subsidize it. TNR also properly castigates Republicans who would suppress political speech through a flag-desecration amendment. One noteworthy dissenter: the Senate's most consistent First Amendment champion, Mitch McConnell.

CLINT BOLICK
Litigation Director
Institute for Justice
Washington, D.C.

Social scientist

TO THE EDITORS:

A March 26 Notebook item on Harvard University's new president, Lawrence Summers, says that he "resembles the classicist Charles W. Eliot, who became Harvard's president in 1869 and dragged the institution into the twentieth century...." Eliot was not a classicist; he was an analytical chemist. While a junior faculty member at Harvard, he lost a contentious contest for a prestigious chair in science to another analytical chemist, Wolcott Gibbs, and left to spend several years as a visiting scientist in Europe. He returned to become a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology until 1869, when he was chosen by Harvard to be its new president.

RICHARD WILLIAMS
Princeton, New Jersey

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Tempest in A Sandbox

FIVE-YEAR-OLD GRADUATES of day care are not the only Americans who have trouble with impulse control. At a now-notorious press conference two weeks ago, researchers at work on the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care rushed to announce an apparently alarming finding: The more time a toddler spends in child care, rather than with his or her mother, the more likely the kid is to exhibit aggressive behavior in kindergarten. A "mean-spirited bully" was how *The Washington Post* described the day care delinquent in a story that, like every other newspaper, it rushed to print. Post-Columbine panic had come to preschool.

MY OWN IMPULSIVE RESPONSE: When will we all grow up? A group of trigger-happy scientists leaped to the podium to publicize results that have yet to be published or subjected to peer review. And the media eagerly spread findings that were tailor-made for sensationalizing before pausing to wonder how much sense they really made. Indeed, reporters covering the press conference made sure to note that the results would prove inflammatory—"rekindle the debate over child care," *The Washington Post* predicted; "undoubtedly inflame" it, said *The New York Times*—as if the media were mere bystanders in the panic. At those dread five words, "a study has shown that...," advocacy groups joined in the commotion, spouting policy implications. The researchers themselves added to the alarmism with warnings against what one called the "mass hysteria" that was almost sure to ensue.

BUT MASS HYSTERIA HASN'T ENSUED. In fact, at the risk of leaping to another premature diagnosis, I'd say Americans are showing healthy skepticism about the latest research that purports to find in children's early years the cause, if not the cure, of the social ill of the hour. After the initial frenzy, reporters followed up with articles that, as the *Times* put it, stopped to "consider not only what science can reveal, but what it cannot." Letters to the editor raised questions about the data and the usefulness of polarized debate. Ironically, the scientists themselves may be responsible for the cautious public reaction to their work. In their eagerness for the spotlight, they've aired results so obviously half-baked that it doesn't take a peer review to detect the flaws. A lay review will do.

START WITH THE BASICS: JUST HOW fierce are those five-year-olds anyway? Seventeen percent of the kids who logged more than 30 hours per week of day care before kindergarten are rated troublemakers when they get there, and yet a brief titled "NIH Backgrounder" notes that "the aggression and non-compliance/defiance reported were all mostly within the normal range." In a surprisingly levelheaded "let kids be kids" cover story, *Time* magazine wondered what exactly we were supposed to be worrying about. The study measured children on an array of traits, from "cruelty" to "talking too much" and "argues a lot," which makes it next to impossible to gauge what the "behavioral problems" really amount to. Are we talking gerbil squeezers or chatterboxes? When a child scores higher on "demands a lot of attention," is it because he also scores higher on "gets in lots of fights" or because he's full of questions? (Other results from the same study seemed to show better language and memory skills in preschoolers who spent more time in day care, but that data got scant attention—maybe because a public burned by the bogus "Mozart effect" is by now presumed too savvy to be snowed by claims of early cognitive boosts.) Assessments of personality are very slippery and often reflect the preoccupation of the moment. If Americans were worried about apathetic teens instead of psychopathic ones, we'd probably be hearing about the disturbing passivity of the other 83 percent of the heavy day care users.

THEN THERE'S THE PROBLEM OF causality. The fact that one experience (day care) correlates with a certain kind of behavior (acting aggressively) doesn't mean the experience caused the behavior. Maybe the parents of rowdy kids are more likely to put those kids into day care. Or maybe the families of kids who spend the most hours in day care are more harried than the households where kids are at home—because, say, the parents are especially pressed for time. And maybe it's this family environment, rather than day care per se, that makes kids more aggressive. Questions like these are exactly the reason why researchers always scold us that correlation does not imply causation. And yet, in this case, it was the investigators who had to be reminded to slow down and ask what other influences might be at work. They even hurried past one rather important domestic influence, the father, when they divided their data into kids cared for either by mothers or by people other than mothers. In blurring a potentially important distinction—more fathers are now primary or equal caregivers in their families—the investigators raised more questions, not least among fathers busy taking care of their kids.

"THE PUBLIC READS THE BOTTOM line," sighed one scientist observing the flurry from afar. "They act on that without putting the study into context." But not in this case. In the weeks since the press conference, the public has had little trouble appreciating the context of a highly charged study that prompted even the investigators to squabble among themselves about whether they had jumped the gun. Dr. Jay Belsky, one of the principal researchers and a veteran of day care controversies, went ahead and peddled a solution that presumed the causation they had not proved. (He would score high on "demands a lot of attention." As he said to a reporter after a day of heavy TV exposure, he doesn't "lie down and play dead.") "If more time in all sorts of [child care] arrangements is predicting disconcerting outcomes," he pronounced, "then if you want to reduce the probability of those outcomes, you reduce the time in care." His colleagues balked, and one of them, Dr. Sarah Friedman of the NICHD, came right out and said so at the press conference. (On "argues a lot," she might do quite well.) Hold off on the "quick solution," she retorted, until we know the real problem. Who's acting out now?

IN THE MEANTIME, OF COURSE, WORKing parents will continue to have their usual child care headaches and qualms (as stay-at-home parents do, too). The classified-ad section in my neighborhood newspaper this week offers an ideal solution for some lucky D.C. family with a toddler. (My kids are past that stage, or I'd be keeping this tip all to myself.) I quote, and I'm not kidding: "TODDLER NANNY seeks position: frequent outings (museums, folk festivals, gardening), outdoor play, crafts & creative arts, skills play (kneading bread, toddler-level washing dishes . . .), folktales and poetry, dramatizations, healthy meals w/ no sugar, lots of hugs." For a bully-proof setup, this macrobiotic Mary Poppins sounds hard to beat.

ANN HULBERT

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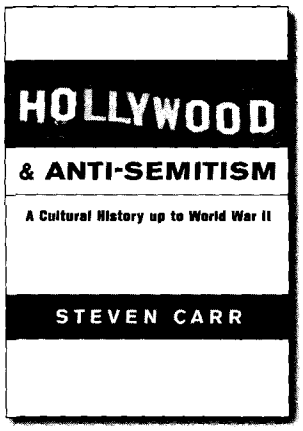

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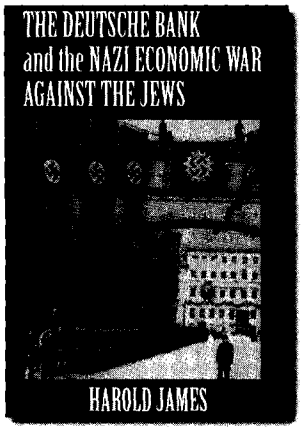

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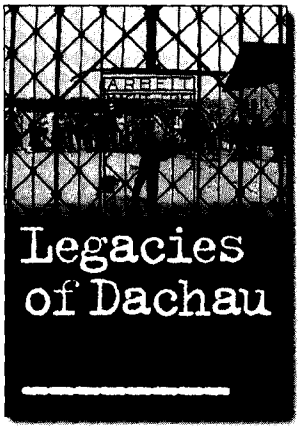

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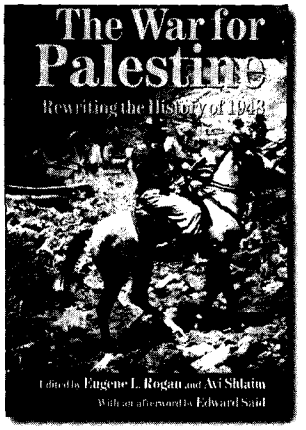
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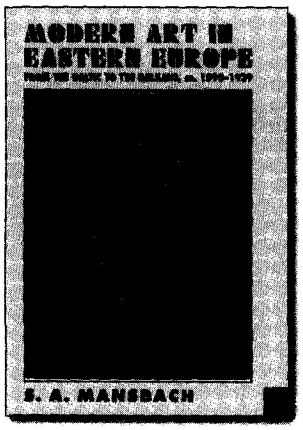

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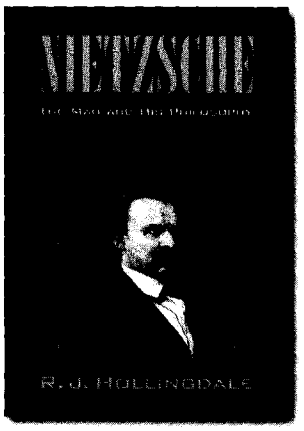

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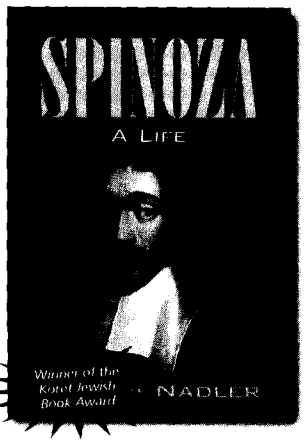

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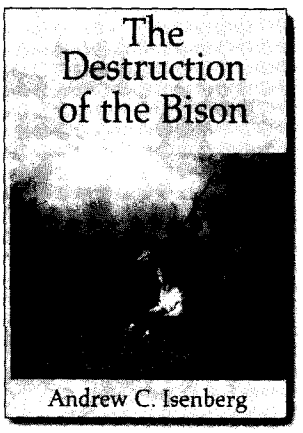

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The Greater Prairie Chicken is one of several species to benefit from the latest conservation effort by Phillips Petroleum. Together with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Phillips will help restore and manage 19,500 acres in northwestern Missouri, making it a safe haven for high-priority birds. Now breeding populations of Greater Prairie Chickens, Henslow's Sparrows and Bobolinks will have an improved chance of survival. And the finished project will become the first of many bird conservation areas to eventually span the country. It's just one more way Phillips works to improve our world and why we're known as The Performance Company.

PHILLIPS PETROLEUM COMPANY

For a copy of our annual report, call 918-661-3700, write to: Phillips Annual Report, B-41, Adams Bldg., Bartlesville, OK 74004, or visit us at www.phillips66.com.

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